



**Addis Ababa
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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

College of Education and Language Studies

Department of Educational Planning and

Management

**Leadership Styles of Leaders in Educational Management
Practices in Addis Ababa Educational Offices: Challenges
and Prospects**

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Leadership Styles of Leaders in Educational Management Practices in Addis Ababa Educational Offices: Challenges and Prospects.

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Erome Tassew entitled, *Leadership styles of leaders in Educational management practices in Addis Ababa Educational offices: Challenges and prospects*, which is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Educational Planning and Project Management, complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepts standards with respect to originality and quality.

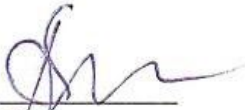
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This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University and that all resources of materials used for the thesis has been duly Acknowledged.

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in educational management practices within Addis Ababa's sub-city and district education offices. The research employed a mixed-methods case study approach, collecting qualitative data through interviews with seven educational office heads (three from sub-cities and four from districts) and quantitative data through 43 questionnaires distributed to staff members. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, while the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study explored how leadership styles are implemented, the challenges faced and the prospects for improving leadership practices in Addis Ababa educational offices. Findings revealed that while democratic leadership is widely acknowledged and preferred for its collaborative and inclusive nature, its actual implementation is inconsistent due to institutional limitations, lack of staff engagement and time constraints. Authoritarian leadership, though effective in enforcing rules and ensuring quick policy application, often leads to reduced participation and limited feedback channels. The research also identified challenges such as poor communication, inadequate delegation, resistance to shared decision-making and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. However, prospects for improvement include ongoing leadership training initiatives, increased stakeholder involvement and the potential for hybrid leadership models that integrate the strengths of both styles. The study concludes that although democratic leadership is widely preferred and promoted within Addis Ababa's educational offices, its implementation is often inconsistent and challenged by institutional limitations, unclear communication and limited participation. Authoritarian tendencies persist in practice, particularly in decision-making processes. However, both leaders and staff express strong interest in leadership improvement through professional training, inclusive governance, and clearer communication strategies. The findings highlight the need for leadership approaches that are context-sensitive, participatory and supported by capacity-building efforts to enhance policy implementation, staff motivation and the overall effectiveness of educational management. This is relevant for policymakers and local administrators working to improve educational management in Ethiopia.

Keywords: democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, Addis Ababa, education office

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The effectiveness and success of institutions strongly depend on leadership. It plays important role in making institutions successful and help them achieve their goal. Leadership styles in educational management influences many aspects of institutional functioning (García-Salirrosas et al., 2025; Bush, 2003). In general, leadership styles are classified based on authority and decision making into Authoritarian (Autocratic), Democratic and Laissez-Faire styles, originating from the classic work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) and discussed in contemporary leadership literature (Northouse, 2016). Democratic leadership promotes collaboration and inclusivity, authoritarian leadership on the other hand highlights control and directive decision-making and laissez-faire leadership allows autonomy to subordinates and promotes slight intervention, (Lewin et al., 1939). These leadership styles represent unique approaches to managing teams and influence the effectiveness of educational management by shaping decision making, communication and policy enforcement. Each of these styles has unique features, strengths and potential problems that can affect how institutional goals are achieved (Northouse, 2016).

Under authoritarian leadership, decision making is centralized. Leaders make key decisions without consulting their subordinates. Policy implementations are quick; this can be helpful in urgent situations, but most of the time, overlooks valuable insights from lower-level administrators (Bass & Bass, 2008). On the other hand, democratic leadership involves office staff and school leaders in decision-making. The decision making under democratic leadership take more time in policy implementation due to long discussions (Northouse, 2016). Under laissez faire leadership, subordinates get autonomy in decision making with slight leader involvement. It nurtures creativity and independence among experienced staff. However, if it is not carefully managed, it risks lack of direction and coordination (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). On the other hand, democratic leadership highlights open dialogue and two way communication. Two ways develops feedback culture and responsibility sharing. Communications that are inclusive helps to build trust and it improves the effectiveness of policy implementation (Yukl, 2013).

At the same time, policy enforcement also differs depending on the leadership styles. In authoritarian leadership, compliance is attained through strict rules and disciplinary measures. This approach assures consistency; however, sometimes resistance is created among staff members (Bass & Bass, 2008). Democratic leadership on the other hand, stresses consensus-building and motivation, with employees more likely to follow policies as they feel involved in the decision making process (Northouse, 2016; Bush, 2003).

Based on the changings on socio political and economic contexts, Leadership in education has evolved across the world. A democratic leadership styles are often emphasized on countries with decentralized governance structures. More centralized systems may lean towards authoritarian models (Bush, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2010). Therefore: effective leadership in education offices is crucial for education quality improvement, ensuring accountability and promoting learning environments which are inclusive (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005).

Likewise, leadership significantly influences policy implementation, administrative efficiency and institutional effectiveness in educational offices. In Addis Ababa's education offices, policies such as the Education and Training Policy (1994) and the Ethiopian Education Roadmap (2018–2030) are operationalized through Education Sector Development Plans (ESDPs) and national directives, requiring effective leadership for successful execution. Democratic leadership encourages transparency and participatory engagement among office staff; authoritarian leadership encourages strict policy enforcement but limit flexibility and participation. The leadership styles adopted within sub-city and woreda educational offices therefore influence decision-making, communication and policy enforcement. Thus it shapes the effectiveness of public sector education management.

Addis Ababa's educational offices are organized into a hierarchical structure. It includes three administrative levels. These are: The Addis Ababa city education bureau, sub-city education offices and woreda-level education offices. The central bureau is responsible for formulating policies, planning and overseeing education across the city. Sub-city offices manage secondary schools under their sub cities and support the woreda offices within their jurisdictions, woreda offices supervise the administration of primary schools, serving as the link between schools and the broader education system. (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2024).

The Addis Ababa administration Education office are tasked with managing schools, supporting teachers, implementing educational policies and ensuring quality service delivery. Given the strategic importance of these offices in translating policy into action and improving school outcomes, it is essential to investigate how different leadership styles particularly democratic and authoritarian are implemented within these offices, along with the challenges and prospects they present in the context of Addis Ababa's educational management. Therefore, this study will examine the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in Addis Ababa's educational offices identify the challenges faced and explore the prospects for enhancing leadership practices to improve educational management and policy outcomes.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Effective leadership helps educational institutions to be successful. In addition, which directly influences organizational performance, decision-making and policy implementation are influenced by it (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership is said to be critical to address complex challenges and ensuring organizational responsiveness Heifetz (1994). Generally, policy executions, resources management and employee performance are shaped by leadership styles in education management. Leadership styles have been widely studied in different organizational settings; however, there are limited researches on leadership style application within Addis Ababa's educational offices. This study aims to fill the gaps by studying the leadership styles implemented in these offices. It studies the challenges they face and the opportunities that helps to improve governance and administrative outcomes. Under democratic leadership, collaboration and shared decision-making, nurturing participatory engagement among staff; is encouraged. But it may face challenges such as bureaucratic delays and conflicts among stakeholders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Northouse, 2016). On the other hand, authoritarian leadership is known for its quick decision making and strict policy enforcement but the risks are: resistance from employees and limited participation (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2016). In educational offices also, leaders come across with challenges such as: bureaucratic constraints, limitation of resources and the difficulty in balancing different expectations. All of these have an impact on the effectiveness policy implementation in educational offices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Bush, 2003).

As it is discussed above, the role of leadership in educational management is crucial. However, researches that examine how democratic and authoritarian leadership styles operate specifically within Ethiopia's educational offices are limited. This gap means that policymakers and education administrators often lack the information they need to strengthen leadership practices and solve real-world challenges in educational governance. If these issues are not properly addressed, educational offices in Addis Ababa may continue to struggle with weak leadership, poor policy execution and limited institutional performance. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities involved in applying democratic and authoritarian leadership styles within Addis Ababa's educational offices. By looking closely at the strengths and limitations of both approaches, the research aims to support the creation of more effective leadership strategies that can improve the overall quality of educational management in Ethiopia.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how democratic and authoritarian leadership styles are practiced in Addis Ababa's educational offices and the challenges and potential benefits associated with implementing these leadership styles. This research aims to identify the obstacles educational leaders face in adopting these styles and to explore the ways in which each style impacts organizational effectiveness, employee satisfaction and policy implementation.

By exploring the perceptions and experiences of educational administrators and staff, the study seeks to understand the actual practices, approaches and challenges involved in implementing these leadership styles. The findings are intended to inform the development of leadership strategies that are aligned with the practical needs of Ethiopia's educational management system and support educational leaders and policymakers in applying effective leadership approaches.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

To analyze the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in Addis Ababa's educational offices, with a focus on their application in decision-making, policy enforcement and stakeholder engagement.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the characteristics and prevalence of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles within Addis Ababa's educational offices.
2. To examine how democratic and authoritarian leadership styles are implemented in decision-making, communication and policy enforcement processes.
3. To explore the challenges educational leaders face in implementing democratic and authoritarian leadership styles.
4. To propose recommendations for improving leadership practices in educational offices based on the study's findings.

1.5. Research Questions

1.5.1. Main Research Question

How are democratic and authoritarian leadership styles implemented in Addis Ababa's educational offices, particularly in relation to decision-making, staff participation and policy enforcement?

1.5.2. Sub Questions

1. Which leadership styles are predominantly practiced in Addis Ababa's educational offices? (Democratic, authoritarian or mixed)
2. In terms of decision making and communication, how are democratic and authoritarian leadership styles implemented within educational offices?
3. What kinds of challenges do educational leaders encounter when trying to apply democratic and authoritarian leadership styles?
4. How do staff members and leaders describe their experiences with these leadership styles, particularly in relation to motivation, job satisfaction, and how their organizations function?

1.6. Significance of the Study

By exploring how democratic and authoritarian leadership styles are implemented in Addis Ababa's educational offices, this study seeks to contribute to the field of educational management. Its relevance lies in Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to strengthen the quality and efficiency of its education system through improved leadership and governance. By examining how these leadership styles operate in real practice, the research fills an important gap in local studies and deepens the understanding of leadership dynamics within the educational sector. The significance of this study is seen both in its practical value—helping to enhance management practices in educational offices—and in its theoretical contribution to academic discussions on leadership implementation in public service institutions. The following sections highlight these practical and theoretical contributions in greater detail.

1.6.1 Practical Significance

This study adds to the understanding of leadership dynamics within Addis Ababa's educational offices and offers insights with valuable practical implications.

For Educational Leaders: The findings provide leaders with a clearer understanding of how different leadership styles affect staff motivation, engagement, and institutional effectiveness. By recognizing the gap between democratic ideals and actual practice, leaders are encouraged to foster more inclusive decision-making and open communication. These efforts can strengthen trust, promote collaboration, and improve overall performance within educational offices.

For Policymakers and Educational Authorities: The study highlights key shortcomings in current leadership policies and practices, including limited leadership training, weak accountability, and inconsistent involvement of stakeholders. Based on these findings, the research offers recommendations for policy reforms that emphasize capacity building, transparency, and a balanced approach—one that combines democratic participation with appropriate authoritative guidance.

Such policies are essential to overcoming systemic barriers and enabling more effective governance within educational offices.

For Future Leadership Development: This study highlights the importance of professional development tailored to the specific challenges faced by Addis Ababa's educational leaders by emphasizing the prospects for leadership improvement. It also advocates continuous efforts to nurture effective leadership competencies by recognizing contextual realities.

1.6.2 Theoretical Significance

In the context of Addis Ababa's educational offices, it highlights the gap between leaders' perceptions of practicing democratic leadership and the actual experience of staff, revealing complexities in implementing truly participatory and inclusive leadership.

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the research expands existing leadership theories by showing how democratic leadership ideals are interpreted and enacted within a specific urban educational setting. It also sheds light on the barriers such as communication gaps, limited staff involvement, and resistance to change that hinder the full realization of democratic leadership. Furthermore, the study reinforces the importance of democratic leadership in promoting collaboration, transparency and accountability in educational institutions. It provides a theoretical basis for strengthening leadership models that prioritize participation and shared decision-making, which are critical for effective educational governance and improved institutional performance.

Overall, this research offers valuable insights for refining democratic leadership theory by contextualizing it within the realities of educational offices in developing urban settings, paving the way for future studies to explore strategies that enhance democratic leadership practice.

1.7. Limitations and Delimitations

This study recognizes and acknowledges several limitations that may have affected the results. At the same time, it is necessary to specify certain delimitations that define the boundaries of the research. The key limitations and delimitations are as follows.

1.7.1 Limitations of the Study

In this study, the data collection process and the generalizability of the findings may have been affected because there were limitations. First challenge is, the sample size and scope were limited. The research involved a relatively small number of participants, including 3 sub-city and 4 district educational office heads, along with 43 staff members from Addis Ababa's educational offices. Given this localized and limited sample, the findings may not be fully generalizable to educational offices in other parts of Ethiopia. The conclusions mainly reflect the experiences and perceptions of Addis Ababa participants and might not represent the wider educational leadership landscape. Secondly, accessing key informants, particularly the heads of educational offices, proved challenging. The leaders had very busy schedules and were occupied with additional responsibilities. They were given additional tasks including overseeing ongoing corridor construction projects. This limited their availability for interviews and extended the data collection timeline. The limited interaction time may have affected the depth of information obtained from these senior leaders. Thirdly, staff members were also often constrained by their heavy workloads, which impacted the timely distribution and completion of questionnaires. This challenge potentially influenced the response rate and the comprehensiveness of quantitative data. Another limitation concerns researcher and participant bias. Qualitative study relies on interviews and self-reported data, responses are influenced by participants' personal experiences and perceptions and it introduces subjectivity. There are efforts to minimize biases through reflective practices during data collection and analysis. Additionally, the organizational and social environment may have influenced participants' responses. Some individuals might have felt the need to align their views with prevailing norms or expectations within their institutions. This could limit the openness or candor of their answers. The researcher remained aware of these

dynamics and took them into account during analysis but fully separating these influences from leadership related feedback is challenging. Even with these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the leadership dynamics within Addis Ababa's educational offices, highlighting areas for further research and improvement.

1.7.2 Delimitation or Scope of the Study

This study is geographically delimited to the educational offices in Addis Ababa. It focuses specifically on the challenges and prospects of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles within this urban context. This focus allows for an in-depth investigation of leadership practices in Addis Ababa. It excludes leadership dynamics in rural or other regional areas of Ethiopia. There is difference in resource availability and educational policies. The research concentrates on the perspectives of educational administrators involved in management and leadership at the office level and does not extend to individual schools or include other leadership styles beyond democratic and authoritarian models. By narrowing the focus to these two leadership styles, this study presents a detailed exploration of specific leadership dynamics in Addis Ababa's educational offices. This however, also limits the scope. Because, other potentially influential leadership approaches are not examined. Furthermore, the temporal scope of the study is confined to the 2024–2025 academic years, thereby focusing on leadership practices and challenges during this specific period.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

These terms are defined for clarity and consistency since they are used in this study:

Leadership Style: refers the leader's approach to direct, motivate, and managing a team. (Northouse, 2018)

Democratic Leadership: refers to a participative style of leadership which involves subordinates in decision making and encourages open communication.

Authoritarian Leadership: A directive style in which leaders make decisions with minimal input from subordinates.

Educational Management: is to mean planning, directing and controlling resources and activities to achieve educational objectives.

Educational Offices: means administrative bodies at sub city and woreda levels which are responsible for management of education within their jurisdictions.

Challenges: is to mean obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of leadership styles. Prospects: is to mean Opportunities and conditions that can improve leadership effectiveness and educational management practices.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The First chapter discuss about the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance, scope, limitations, definition of key terms, and organization of the study. The second includes relevant literature reviews, theoretical foundations, leadership styles, management models and related empirical studies. Third chapter discusses about the research design, study population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, procedures and methods of analysis. The fourth chapter includes analysis and interpretations of findings from the qualitative and quantitative data. The Fifth chapter presents summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the study. The References section follows, listing all sources cited in the study according to the required academic referencing style.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It is important to first see the general concept of leadership and the theoretical basics that guide it in order to get a general understanding about leadership styles and their application in organizational context. Basically, Leadership involves the ability to influence, motivate and guide individuals or groups toward achieving common goals (Northouse, 2016). There are various theories and models to explain how leadership functions, why certain approaches are more effective in specific contexts and how leaders can adapt their style to meet organizational needs. These theories form the backbone of leadership practice, offering insights into the balance between authority, participation and collaboration in different environments (Bush, 2003).

In this literature review we start with an overview of leadership, leadership styles and theories that lead to the conceptual basis to understand democratic and authoritarian leadership approaches. It studies leadership theories ranging from early trait based perspectives to contemporary situational, contingency and transformational models. Therefore this review highlights the relationship between leadership philosophy, managerial behavior and organizational outcomes by connecting theory with practice.

Then the review will focus on democratic and authoritarian leadership styles which are two contrasting approaches that have been discussed in educational management literature. Democratic leadership promotes participation and open communication. Decision making is also shared. It foster in a collaborative work culture (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Gastil, 1994). On the other hand, authoritarian leadership centralizes authority, emphasizes discipline and relies on top-down decision making to ensure order and compliance (Bass & Bass, 2008). While each style has its advantages and drawbacks, their suitability often depends on the organizational culture, the nature of the tasks, and the level of professional autonomy among staff members (Yukl, 2013; Bush, 2003). This review investigates how these leadership styles are implemented in educational offices by looking at both theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. It studies the impact they have on critical organizational functions such as decision making processes, communication flows, staff motivation and policy enforcement.

2.1 Concept of Leadership and Leadership Styles

2.1.1 Overview

Leadership is a complex concept and has no single universally accepted definition. It is among the most studied topics in both business and academic fields and has been widely researched across various disciplines, including education, management and psychology. Leadership is currently one of the most studied yet least understood topics, due to its complex and mysterious nature as a life phenomenon. (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016)

Leadership has been very fascinating concept for scholars and the public. It inspired stories of influential figures that have shaped history and built empires. Even though it is significant, leadership remains a complex and partly mysterious phenomenon because it has multiple perspectives that attempt to explain why some individuals are more effective than others. The scientific study of leadership is emerged prominently in the twentieth century, has focused on various aspects such as traits, behaviors, power dynamics, situational influences and leadership as a shared and collective process (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013). While research has illuminated many dimensions of leadership, significant questions about its effectiveness and application in different contexts remain. Researchers have examined leadership from multiple perspectives, focusing on areas such as authentic leadership, cognitive approaches, complexity and adaptive systems and shared or distributed leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) define leadership as the process of influencing group activities beyond expectations.

Similarly, other scholars describe leadership as guiding others in decision-making and influencing organizational goals (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008). Building on these general concepts, various leadership styles have emerged to describe the different ways leaders exercise authority, communicate and interact with their teams. Thus the following section reviews the concepts of leadership in general and it studies the main leadership styles relevant to this study, drawing on definitions and insights from established literature.

2.1.2 Definition of Leadership in General

Leadership is a multifaceted concept, generally understood as the process of influencing and guiding individuals or groups toward achieving common goals. It involves setting a vision, making decisions, fostering collaboration and motivating people to work toward shared objectives. Over the years, scholars have developed various perspectives and models to explain what leadership is and how it functions and the qualities that make it effective.

Leadership is often discussed alongside concepts such as power, authority, management and supervision, leading to diverse definitions. Despite differences, definitions converge on leadership as a process of social influence where individuals or groups intentionally guide and facilitate activities to achieve specific goals (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Schein, 1992; Drath & Palus, 1994; House et al., 1999). Leadership can be understood in terms of traits, behaviors, interactions and roles reflecting its complexity and the variety of research perspectives. While some debate its scientific basis, most scholars agree on its critical role in organizational effectiveness (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; House et al., 1999).

In educational contexts, leadership similarly lacks a universally agreed definition but central to most interpretations is leadership as a social influence process that unifies people around shared values and goals (Cuban, 1988). Effective school leaders develop, communicate and sustain a vision to inspire commitment and guide strategic planning (Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989), while

adapting their style to context and stakeholder needs (Fullan, 1992; Bolam et al., 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 1996).

2.2 Leadership Theories

Leadership theories provide frameworks that help explain how and why certain individuals emerge as effective leaders in various settings. These theories have evolved over many decades as scholars have sought to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of leadership. Rather than viewing leadership as a simple set of traits or behaviors, modern theories recognize that leadership effectiveness depends on a dynamic interplay of personal characteristics, observable behaviors, situational contexts and the relationships between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013).

Early leadership research focused primarily on identifying inherent traits or qualities that distinguish leaders from non-leaders. The Trait Theory, one of the earliest approaches, emphasized characteristics such as intelligence, confidence and integrity (Bass, 1990). As research progressed, attention shifted to the Behavioral Theories, which examined leaders' actions and styles rather than inherent qualities. Classic studies, such as those by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) and later the Ohio State and Michigan studies (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Likert, 1961), highlighted task-oriented versus relationship-oriented behaviors as critical dimensions of leadership.

Later, Situational and Contingency Theories emerged emphasizing that effective leadership depends not only on the leader's style but also on the context in which leadership occurs. Fiedler's (1967) contingency model stressed the interaction between leader style and situational favorableness, while Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) situational leadership theory focused on follower readiness as a determinant of leadership effectiveness. More contemporary approaches, such as Transformational Leadership, highlight how leaders inspire, motivate and empower followers toward shared goals. Burns (1978) introduced the concept, which was later expanded by Bass (1985, 1990) to emphasize idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

These diverse leadership theories serve as foundational guides for both researchers and practitioners, offering valuable insights into the qualities, actions and environmental factors that contribute to successful leadership outcomes. Understanding these theories is crucial for interpreting how leadership functions in different organizations and for designing leadership development strategies that are responsive to varied needs and challenges.

2.2.1 Trait Theory

Trait theory is an early approach to understanding leadership, based on the idea that certain inherent characteristics distinguish leaders from non-leaders. While early studies suggested these traits were stable predictors of success, Stogdill (1948) provided a pivotal challenge to this view.

His research emphasized that traits alone do not ensure leadership effectiveness and that situational factors also play a crucial role.

Modern research, however, has revived the importance of traits, recognizing them as a foundational component of leadership. Key attributes linked to effective leadership include intelligence, initiative, self-confidence, drive, honesty, persistence, social skills, emotional stability, adaptability and integrity (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). These traits interact with environmental and organizational contexts, shaping how leaders motivate, guide, and organize others.

Modern perspectives recognize that leadership effectiveness results from the interaction of personal traits with situational and relational factors. Social intelligence and personality traits are crucial for facilitating leadership, but traits alone are insufficient for success. Overall, Trait Theory highlights that individual characteristics form a foundation for leadership, but effective practice requires consideration of context and relationships (Northouse, 2016).

2.2.2 Behavioral Theory

The behavioral approach to leadership emphasizes what leaders do rather than who they are, distinguishing it from the trait approach, which focuses on personality characteristics, and the skills approach, which emphasizes leader capabilities (Northouse, 2016). This perspective shifted leadership research toward the actions and styles of leaders and how these behaviors influence followers in achieving organizational goals.

Researchers studying the behavioral approach identified two broad categories of leader behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors. Task behaviors facilitate goal accomplishment by clarifying roles, organizing work, and setting performance expectations. Relationship behaviors, in contrast, aim to support followers' well-being, create trust, and (Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986). Foster positive interpersonal relationships within the group. The core purpose of the behavioral approach is to examine how leaders combine these behaviors to enhance follower performance and satisfaction (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013).

One of the foundational contributions to this approach came from the Ohio State Leadership Studies in the late 1940s and early 1960s, which identified two distinct leader behaviors: initiating structure (task-oriented) and consideration (relationship oriented) (Halpin & Winer, 1957). The Ohio State studies demonstrated that these behaviors are independent dimensions, meaning a leader can score high or low on each separately. Around the same time, the Michigan Leadership Studies explored leadership in small groups, emphasizing the impact of employee centered versus production centered behaviors on group effectiveness. Later, Blake and Mouton's managerial grid (1964) extended this research by mapping leaders' task and relationship behaviors in organizational settings, providing a practical framework for understanding and improving leadership performance (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Overall, the behavioral approach highlights that effective leadership is not solely a matter of innate traits but involves observable actions that can be developed, learned, and adapted to various organizational contexts (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013).

2.2.3 Situational Leadership Theory

Situational Leadership Theory, developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1977) and based on Reddin's (1967) 3D management style theory, emphasizes that effective leadership depends on the context or situation. Unlike approaches that focus on fixed traits or behaviors, this theory argues that there is no universal "best" leadership style; rather, effectiveness lies in matching leadership behavior to the specific needs of followers and the situational demands (Northouse, 2016).

The theory identifies two main types of leader behaviors: directive (task-oriented) and supportive (relationship-oriented). Directive behaviors involve giving clear instructions, defining roles, monitoring progress, and structuring tasks, whereas supportive behaviors include consultation, encouragement, and praise (Graef, 1997; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Leaders are expected to adapt their balance of directive and supportive behaviors according to followers' competence and commitment levels, which can vary over time. For example, low maturity followers require high levels of direction, while high-maturity followers can be delegated greater autonomy (Graef, 1997; Northouse, 2016).

The Situational Leadership developed by Blanchard and colleagues (1985, 2013), operationalizes this approach by combining two dimensions: leadership style and follower development level. The model provides a practical framework for leaders to diagnose the developmental needs of followers and adapt their style accordingly. It emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and continuous adjustment, recognizing that followers' skills and motivation can change, and that leaders must sometimes reintroduce directive or supportive behaviors as circumstances shift (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013).

Situational Leadership Theory also highlights the long-term development of subordinates, suggesting that leaders can foster growth by gradually reducing direction and increasing support as followers gain skills and confidence. The pace of this development depends on task complexity and the initial maturity of the followers, and leaders must remain adaptable to setbacks or regressions in follower development (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Graef, 1997).

In educational and organizational settings, this approach is particularly relevant because it enables leaders to respond to diverse needs, changing policies, and varying levels of follower competence and motivation, thereby improving performance and satisfaction.

2.2.4 Contingency Theory

Contingency theories suggest that a leader's effectiveness depends on the context, with situational factors influencing outcomes (Yukl, 2013). These models examine leader behaviors (task or relationship-oriented), subordinate or group performance and situational variables

beyond immediate leader control, such as task structure, subordinate needs, expertise, and formal authority. Mediating factors like role clarity, self-efficacy, task skills, or group coordination may explain how leadership behaviors and situational conditions affect results. Increasing complexity arises as more variables are incorporated, making empirical testing challenging (Yukl, 2013).

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (1977) is a specific model emphasizing adaptation of leadership style to follower readiness, determined by competence and commitment. It identifies four styles Telling, Selling, Participating and Delegating matched to different development levels. Leaders adjust from directive to supportive behaviors as readiness grows, enhancing performance and satisfaction (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008). Although widely used in education and other fields, critics note it may oversimplify leadership by concentrating mainly on follower readiness (Graeff, 1997).

2.2.5 Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a widely studied approach that emphasizes inspiring and developing followers by focusing on values, ethics, vision, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2016). Leaders using this style engage with followers, raise motivation and moral standards, and help them reach their full potential, often achieving outcomes beyond expectations. This approach contrasts with transactional leadership, which is based on exchanges and agreements rather than individual development. Transactional leaders motivate followers through rewards or incentives linked to performance and compliance, advancing their own and their followers' objectives, without necessarily addressing personal growth or intrinsic motivation (Kuhnert, 1994; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

The popularity of transformational leadership has grown across disciplines such as management, education, nursing, and industrial engineering, largely because it emphasizes intrinsic motivation and follower development, which aligns with the needs of modern organizations and workgroups (Lowe & Gardner, 2001; Antonakis, 2012). Historical and contemporary examples include Mohandas Gandhi, who inspired social change, and Ryan White, who raised awareness and influenced public policy, illustrating the transformative effect leaders can have on both individuals and society (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2016).

In summary, while transactional leadership maintains order and ensures compliance through structured exchanges, transformational leadership seeks to elevate followers' motivation, values and potential, making the latter especially effective in dynamic or uncertain environments.

2.2.6 Path Goal Theory

Under the Path Goal theory, leaders motivate their followers by clarifying the path to success and provide necessary support or to achieve the goals (House & Mitchell, 1974; Northouse, 2016). This theory promotes both follower performance and satisfaction by addressing followers' motivational needs. Evans (1970), House (1971), House and Dessler (1974), and House and Mitchell (1974),

Unlike the situational approach, Path Goal theory highlights the interaction between leader behavior, follower characteristics and task or organizational context. Leaders choose behaviors that increase the missing elements in the work environment, remove obstacles, provide guidance and offer rewards to help followers reach their goals (Indvik, 1986; Northouse, 2016).

The theory is grounded in expectation theory of motivation. It proposes that followers are motivated when they believe they can succeed and their effort will lead to the desired outcomes, and the rewards are valuable. Leaders using Path Goal theory must understand what follower's value and provide those rewards contingent on goal achievement. Different leader behaviors such as directive, supportive, participative or achievement oriented have varying effects depending on follower traits and task characteristics. By choosing the appropriate style, leaders increase followers' expectations for success, satisfaction, and overall motivation (House & Mitchell, 1974; Northouse, 2016).

2.2.7 Servant Leadership Theory

The servant leadership theory as the name indicates is about serving others. Here, leaders focus on the growth, and development of followers before organizational objectives. It is rooted in humility and stewardship. It promotes trust and collaboration (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991). Under Servant leadership, leaders create an environment in which followers feel valued and empowered and in turn it promotes sustainable performance and ethical practices.

2.2.8 Charismatic Leadership Theory

Under this theory, the leaders inspire their team to have high performance and commitment by using their personal charm, vision and communication. According to some scholars, charismatic leaders' articulate emotionally appealing vision and they show confidence in the achievement of the vision (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Most of the time, charismatic leaders emerge in times of crisis or change. They motivate followers by being personal example and symbolic actions. Charisma can mobilize rapid change however; the risk is when creating an overreliance on the leader's personality, and it can be detrimental if the leader leaves or acts unethically (House, 1977).

2.3 Leadership Styles based on the use of autonomy

Leadership styles refer to the behaviors of leaders that they use to guide, influence and manage their teams. To classify these behaviors based on how much control leaders exert and the level of participation they allow from their subordinates, different models have been proposed. Mostly, the effectiveness of a leadership style depends on the organizational context, the nature of the task, and the readiness of the followers therefore, Understanding these styles is critical (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013).

One of the most widely recognized frameworks for categorizing leadership styles is based on leader control and subordinate involvement. This identifies authoritarian, democratic and laissez-

faire leadership as distinct approaches (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). Among these, authoritarian and democratic styles are widely studied in organizational and educational settings.

Authoritarian Leadership refers to a leadership style by which the leaders have high degree of control in the decision making. Leaders who adopt this style tend to give clear, direct instructions and expect compliance without much input or feedback from subordinates (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2016). This style can be effective in situations that demand quick decisions or where tasks are routine and require strict adherence to rules—such as during crises or in highly structured environments. However, the authoritarian approach may lead to negative outcomes if overused, including resistance from staff, decreased creativity and innovation, low morale, and limited opportunities for staff development (Lewin et al., 1939; Northouse, 2016).

When we come to democratic Leadership, it promotes shared decision-making and active participation from team members. Democratic leaders encourage open communication, invite input and it involve subordinates in problem-solving and planning (Bush, 2003; Northouse, 2018). This participatory style fosters commitment to organizational goals, enhances creativity, and cultivates a sense of ownership and motivation among staff (Yukl, 2013). Despite these benefits, democratic leadership can slow down decision-making processes because reaching consensus often requires time and negotiation, which may be challenging in urgent situations (Northouse, 2016; Bush, 2003). Laissez-Faire Leadership (also called delegate leadership) involves minimal leader intervention, allowing subordinates to make most decisions independently (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2016). This hands-off style can promote autonomy, innovation, and self-motivation among highly skilled and experienced teams. Nevertheless, it may lead to inefficiency, lack of direction, and poor performance if employees are inexperienced, unmotivated, or unclear about organizational goals (Lewin et al., 1939; Northouse, 2016).

Educational leaders, in particular, benefit from understanding these leadership styles as they navigate complex and dynamic school environments. The ability to adapt leadership approaches according to the maturity and readiness of their team, as well as the demands of specific tasks or challenges, is essential for effective management (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008). For instance, less experienced teams may require more directive leadership, while highly skilled and motivated teams thrive under participative leadership. Flexibility in style allows leaders to balance control and collaboration to achieve optimal outcomes in educational settings.

2.3.1. Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership promotes participation, collaboration and shared decision making. Therefore, leaders who implement this style encourage discussion, they value team input and they integrate different perspectives into their decision making. According to studies, employees prefer democratic leadership (Bass, 1990). In educational settings in similar, this approach promotes trust, open communication and teamwork (Bush, 2003; Northouse, 2016).

However, democratic leadership is not without its challenges such as inefficiencies in decision making (particularly in resource-constrained settings). In addition to that, cultural factors may delay the full implementation of democratic practices. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), democratic leadership enhances engagement and school effectiveness, but it may be difficult to apply in environments where hierarchical traditions prevail.

Democratic leadership, also referred to as participative leadership, emphasizes collective decision-making, open communication, and active involvement of team members in organizational processes. Leaders practicing this style encourage input from subordinates, value diverse perspectives, and foster an environment of mutual respect and collaboration (Yammarino & Bass, 1990). Decision-making is often decentralized, allowing employees to feel a sense of ownership over outcomes and enhancing commitment to organizational goals.

Democratic leadership helps to get higher satisfaction and motivation. It can also slow decision making, mainly in urgent situations. Excessive discussions can sometimes delay the action, therefore it make it less effective in crisis scenarios (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). However, this style remains widely recognized for cultivating a sense of belonging and mutual responsibility among team members.

2.3.2. Authoritarian Leadership

Autocratic or authoritarian leadership is characterized by a centralized approach. By centralized approach, we mean the leader holds the authority and makes decisions independently. This then allows little input from subordinates (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Bass, 1990). Leaders who adopt this style therefore exercise strict control over tasks; they maintain chain of command and focus on efficiency, discipline and compliance. Authoritarian leadership can be effective in urgent situations or highly structured environments. However, it is said to suppress creativity, reduce collaboration and negatively affect employee morale when used too much (Lewin et al., 1939; Northouse, 2016). Authoritarian leadership style relies on one-way communication that means, there will be limited feedback from subordinates and may hinder engagement (Northouse, 2016).

2.3.3 Laissez-Faire

Laissez-faire leadership style is a leadership style were leaders use hands off approach. Under this leadership style, leaders provide slight guidance and gives autonomy in decision making for subordinates. Leaders practicing this style delegate authority by trusting team members to manage their own work and resolve issues independently (Chaudhry & Javed, 2012). This leadership style encourages creativity and innovation because employees have the freedom to experiment and develop solutions without constant oversight. It is most effective when team members are highly skilled, self-motivated and are capable of working independently. Thus it leads to high job satisfaction and strong ownership of outcomes (Chaudhry & Javed, 2012). However, when employees don't have the necessary expertise, experience and motivation, the absence of clear direction can result in confusion, poor coordination and less productivity. In

educational and organizational contexts, overuse of laissez-faire leadership without suitable monitoring may lead to inconsistencies in performance and accountability issues.

2.4. Importance of Leadership in Educational Settings

Effective leadership in schools influences the quality of education and the overall success of the institution. Thus, it is vital for numerous reasons. The following are importance of leadership in education.

Improving student results: one indication of strong leaders is that they implement effective pedagogical strategies. They encourage positive learning environments and they make sure ensure that resources are used to support student success. Leadership in general involves influencing group activities and guiding others toward the overall organizational objectives. This enables to get improved learning outcomes (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Improving quality of teacher and morale: another indication of strong leaders is that they encourage cultures that promote professional development and they acknowledge achievements. Such actions therefore improve teacher satisfaction because they shape the organizational environment and impacts employee motivation and growth (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Driving organizational change and innovation: another indication of strong leaders is that they navigate evolving educational landscapes, adopt new technologies and implement innovative programs that improve learning and administrative efficiency. Leadership, in this sense, involves influencing group activities to go beyond the expectations and achieve new goals (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Ensuring accountability and transparency: good leaders support standards, they manage resources effectively and they communicate openly with stakeholders. These responsibilities are very important to guide decision making and achieve organizational objectives while maintaining clear communication and responsibility (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008).

2.5. Role of Educational Office Leaders

Educational office leaders handle many administrative duties thus their role goes far beyond managing individual schools. These duties include, working in ministries and regional bureaus, or curriculum centers, these leaders make sure that educational policies and practices are well coordinated. Their main tasks of the leaders are developing and implementing policies, managing resources and supporting professional development. The goal is to improve school performance and ensure fair access to education (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012; Bush, 2011). They also work closely with parents, communities and government bodies to build trust and to have shared commitment toward educational goals. Strong leadership at this level depends on using data to make informed decisions, set priorities, and plan strategically (Bush, 2011). In essence,

educational office leaders bring together policies, resources, training, and collaboration to strengthen the entire education system and move national goals forward.

2.6. Impact of Applying Democratic and Authoritarian Leadership Styles

As we have discussed above, leadership style in general has effect on employee satisfaction, motivation, organizational outcomes and policy implementation. Democratic leadership promotes employee satisfaction and motivation because it promotes inclusion, shared decision making, open communication and contributions are recognized under democratic leadership (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Northouse, 2016). Participatory approach encourages collaboration and accountability. It creates a positive work environment and it is characterized by fairness, respect and trust. It enhances both job satisfaction and long term organizational performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). It also supports effective policy implementation by transparent and inclusive decision making. These results a great acceptance and more sustainable outcomes (Bush, 2003). However, democratic leadership is said to have slow decision-making in situations that require rapid action due to the need for consultation and consensus building. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership centralizes decision-making and relies on strict directives, which can be effective for quick decisions or emergency situations (Bass, 1990). This style is good for short term compliance and quick implementation of policies. Most of the time, authoritarian leadership limits autonomy, minimize creativity and can lower employee satisfaction because of its poor communication and minimal involvement in decisions (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Northouse, 2016). Over time, the top-down approach of authoritarian leadership may undermine long-term effectiveness, increasing turnover, decreasing innovation, and reducing organizational commitment.

In general, democratic leadership supports sustainable performance and collaboration, on the other hand, authoritarian leadership may have short term efficiency but, at the cost of morale, motivation and long-term innovation. Making democratic approaches generally is more suitable for dynamic and participatory educational settings.

2.7. Challenges in Implementing Leadership Styles in Educational Settings

When leaders implement democratic or authoritarian leadership styles in educational management, there are challenges which are influenced by cultural norms, hierarchies in organizations, political dynamics and limited resources (Bush, 2003; Northouse, 2016). In some organizations, there is deeply rooted respect for authority and centralized control. This in many institutions can restrict staff participation, limit open communication and constrain the effective implementation of democratic practices.

Democratic leadership promotes employee satisfaction, motivation and commitment by encouraging inclusion, shared decision-making and recognition of contributions (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Northouse, 2016). It also supports long-term organizational efficiency and effective policy implementation by transparency and participation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Bush, 2003 ;). However, democratic leadership requires time, resources and qualified personnel. Often, these

are limited in underfunded educational offices. Hierarchical structures, limited professional development opportunities and resistance to change can further limit democratic leadership application, because staff lacks trust, fear accountability or be reluctant to embrace participatory practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

When we come to authoritarian leadership, it centralizes decision making and relies on strict directives. This therefore can help to get quick action and to ensure compliance. (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2016). Authoritarian approach may be effective in emergencies or in situations that need immediate decisions but if we rely on top down control too much it can suppress creativity, lessen morale, separate staff and limit long-term institutional effectiveness. Political pressures and policy instability often highlight authoritarian practices, but this may come at the expense of staff motivation, innovation, and inclusive decision-making (Bush, 2003).

Thus, given these challenges, educational leaders in should develop contextual awareness to blend elements of both authoritarian and democratic styles to match situational demands by fostering trust, participation and effectiveness (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008). Balancing these approaches is essential to overcome cultural, political, and resource-related constraints and to enhancing both administrative efficiency and educational outcomes.

2.8. Empirical Studies on Leadership Practices

2.8.1 Importance of Empirical Studies for the Research

To provide evidence-based insights into how these leadership styles are applied in real organizational contexts, we should see empirical studies. Empirical studies are critical for this research because they explain concepts and propose models, empirical studies examine actual practices, behaviors and outcomes, allowing researchers to understand the practical implications of leadership styles. For this study on leadership in Addis Ababa's educational offices, empirical studies help to understand current practices, identify challenges and barriers and Highlight research gaps.

2.8.2 Global Empirical Studies

International studies highlight the impact of democratic and autocratic leadership styles on employee performance, motivation and satisfaction. Democratic leadership positively influenced job satisfaction and autocratic leadership increased stress and reduced satisfaction. A study reveals that democratic leadership positively influence job satisfaction and autocratic leadership increased stress and reduced satisfaction among teachers in Pakistan Bhatti et al. (2012). Similarly, Hamze and Abdulkhaliq (2025) reported that democratic leadership encourages employee motivation in the Ministry of Interior in Iraq, whereas autocratic leadership had no important effect. These studies highlight a consistent trend. That is democratic leadership generally promotes higher employee satisfaction and performance. However, contextual factors such as organizational structure, task complexity and culture moderate these effects.

2.8.2 Local Studies

Studies in Ethiopia also highlight that the role of leadership style is very crucial in shaping organizational effectiveness, staff motivation and performance. For instance, in educational settings, a study found that secondary school principals in Addis Ababa were less effective because of limited experience and qualifications. And it recommended capacity building and the adoption of participatory leadership to improve communication and school community relations Tariku Mulushewa (2021). Similarly, another study in Holeta Town secondary schools reveals that transformational leadership was poorly understood and minimally practiced because of principals constrained by administrative overload, budget shortages and low parental involvement and it limits their ability to motivate teachers and drive school improvement Berhanu Shibiru (2023). At the institutional level, it is observed that leadership at the Federal Technical Vocational Education and Training Institute was hindered by weak competencies, inadequate application of quality management principles, and resource shortages, undermining performance Fresibhat Alemu (2017). Focusing on private schools, Zelalem Tesfaye (2021) found that situational leadership practices were moderate, and emphasized that adapting leadership to contextual needs is essential for managing challenges such as staff turnover, resistance to change, and resource limitations. Similarly, studies which are not educational support these patterns. Transformational, transactional and democratic leadership styles positively influenced employee job satisfaction, whereas autocratic and laissez-faire styles had negative effects at Dashen bank Beimnet Mesfin (2024). Another study at Coca-Cola Ethiopia states that transformational leadership has positive effect on employee motivation Estifanos Gezahegn (2020). These studies jointly indicate that participatory and transformational leadership approaches enhance motivation, communication and institutional performance. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership styles mostly constrain effectiveness. This evidence underlines the importance of examining democratic and authoritarian leadership practices in Addis Ababa's educational offices.

2.8.3 Research Gap

There are local and international empirical studies which focus on the effects of leadership styles (mainly democratic and autocratic) on the performance of employees, job satisfaction and organizational outcomes in general. There are local studies in Ethiopia that focus on educational institutions and other organizational settings such as those by Gebrekiros (2020) and Yimer (2014). These studies primarily focus on educational institutions and other organizational settings. They highlight the challenges in leadership effectiveness, staff participation and institutional constraints. These studies show that even though democratic leadership positively influences employee performance and satisfaction, its application is mostly inconsistent because of limited experience, inadequate training and organizational barriers.

In some international studies, it is said that democratic leadership generally improves job satisfaction, motivation and performance. On the other hand, autocratic leadership increase stress and has little or negative impact on employee outcomes Bhatti et al. (2012) and Hamze and

Abdulkhaliq (2025). However, these studies are typically conducted in private organizations, schools and government institutions in different cultural contexts. Therefore they do not fully reveal the sole administrative and cultural environment of Ethiopian educational offices. Thus, despite this growing body of research, there several gaps:

Contextual Gap: Most of the international studies are conducted in school settings outside Ethiopia. There is limited empirical evidence on how leadership styles influence employee performance in Ethiopian governmental educational offices, particularly at the sub-city and woreda levels.

Comparative Gap: In some studies, democratic and autocratic leadership are studied separately, few of them compare the effects of these leadership styles systematically within the context of the same organizational, especially combining both local and international perspectives.

Practical Implications Gap: Existing researches hardly investigates practical strategies to improve leadership practices in Ethiopian educational offices. Based on the empirical evidence, policymakers are left with limited guidance to improve organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Therefore this study focuses on the challenges and prospects of implementing democratic and autocratic leadership styles in Addis Ababa's educational offices. It provides both quantitative and qualitative insights from principals, supervisors and staff. This approach not only contributes to the global understanding of leadership effectiveness but also offers practical recommendations for improving leadership practices in the local educational context.

2.9. Chapter summary

Over all, democratic and authoritarian leadership styles each have strengths and limitations in educational management. Democratic leadership promotes collaboration, satisfaction and innovation however the risk is it slows decision-making. Authoritarian leadership offers control and clarity but can harm morale and creativity. Understanding these dynamics is important to effective leadership. The unique cultural, structural and political factors influencing leadership in this setting, the unique cultural, structural and political factors influencing leadership requires careful consideration to adopt styles that support both organizational goals and the professional growth of educational staff.

This study therefore explores these leadership styles. It studies their implementation, the challenges they face and the prospects to improve leadership practices within Addis Ababa's sub-city and woreda education offices. Thus, it aims to contribute to practical insights that can inform policy and leadership development initiatives. Ultimately it enhances the effectiveness and responsiveness of educational management.

Conceptual Framework

The illustration in the following framework shows the relationship between leadership styles and educational management outcomes in Addis Ababa's educational offices by considering the challenges and prospects that influence this relationship. Here, the independent variable is the leadership style, and it includes democratic and authoritarian styles. And the dependent variable is the effectiveness of educational management this include decision-making quality, staff participation and general organizational performance. Challenges such as limited resources, poor communication, and institutional constraints might delay the implementation of effective leadership styles on the other hand; prospects like opportunities for staff development, participative decision-making and supportive policies can enhance leadership effectiveness.

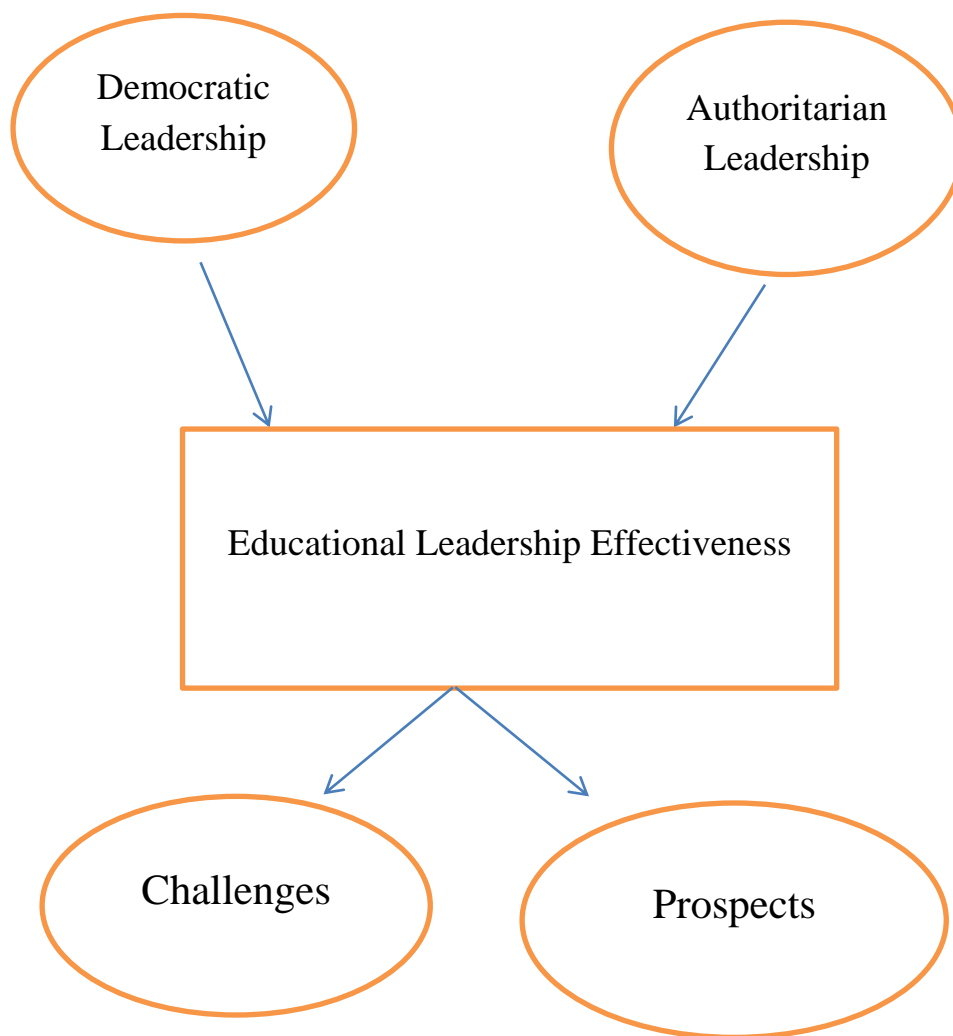


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Own Conceptualization from the Literature Reviewed

The arrows from leadership styles to educational management effectiveness indicate that the type of leadership adopted influences organizational outcomes. Challenges can negatively affect this relationship, reducing the effectiveness of leadership practices. Prospects serve as enabling factors that can strengthen the implementation of leadership styles and improve management outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with research design, sources of data, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection procedure and instruments, type of data, data collection method and pilot study that is used in gathering and analyzing the data.

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a mixed methods research approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to benefit from the complementary strengths of each. By combining these two approaches, the study ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation namely, the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in educational management practices within Addis Ababa's sub-city and woreda educational offices (Gay, Mills, & Airasia, 2019).

Qualitative research is an approach that focuses on exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences, perceptions and meanings attributed to social phenomena. It relies on open-ended data collection methods such as interviews, observations and document analysis to generate in-depth, contextual insights (Gay, Mills, & Airasia, 2019).

Quantitative research, on the other hand, involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to examine patterns, relationships, or trends. It emphasizes objectivity and is often used to test hypotheses or measure the prevalence of certain variables across a population (Creswell, 2012).

In this study, the qualitative approach was central to capturing rich, descriptive data that reflects participants' experiences, perceptions and contextual understanding. This included conducting in-depth interviews with education office heads, which allowed for detailed exploration of leadership behaviors, challenges faced, and perceived prospects for improvement.

The quantitative approach, by contrast, allowed for the collection of measurable data through structured questionnaires administered to staff members. This enabled the researcher to analyze patterns, frequencies, and relationships using statistical methods. Quantitative data offered a broader view of trends and general responses across multiple participants, thereby supporting triangulation and validation of qualitative findings (Gay, Mills, & Airasia, 2019).

To effectively integrate these two approaches, the study employed a case study design, which is well suited for exploring contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts. A case study focuses on a bounded system, in this case, the educational offices within selected sub-cities and woredas of Addis Ababa. This design supports the investigation of the "how" and "why" of leadership implementation in a specific setting, rather than simply examining outcomes or testing predefined hypotheses.

According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012), a case study is particularly appropriate when the research aims to understand a specific unit of analysis in depth and when the objective is to uncover meaning and generate insights. This aligns well with the current study's objectives, which are to examine how leadership styles are practically applied, the contextual challenges encountered, and the prospects for leadership improvement in Ethiopian educational offices.

The qualitative case study design, enriched with quantitative elements, provided a robust methodological framework. It allowed for triangulation between qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire responses, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and richness of the findings. Ultimately, this integrated approach offered a holistic understanding of leadership practices within the real-world context of educational management.

3.2. Study Population

The study population consisted of educational leaders and administrative staff working within the educational offices of selected sub-cities and districts in Addis Ababa. Specifically, it included heads of sub-city education offices, heads of district (woreda) education offices, and key administrative personnel involved in leadership and management functions.

Addis Ababa is administratively divided into 11 sub-cities and 119 districts (woredas), each with its own educational office responsible for managing education services at its respective level. Sub-city educational offices primarily oversee high schools and coordinate with the Addis Ababa Education Bureau, while district education offices mainly manage primary education within their localities.

For this study, educational offices from three conveniently accessible sub-cities and six districts under these sub-cities were selected. The heads of these offices served as the primary informants for qualitative data collection through interviews, given their central roles in leadership and decision-making. Additionally, selected administrative staff from these offices participated by completing questionnaires to provide supplementary perspectives and support data triangulation.

Based on available organizational information and staff listings, the total population in the selected offices was estimated at approximately 50–60 individuals, including heads, team leaders, coordinators, and other key administrative personnel. This estimate provides a realistic scope for data collection while acknowledging that exact numbers were not available.

This study population was appropriate for addressing the research objectives, as these educational leaders and staff are directly responsible for implementing and experiencing democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in the management of educational institutions within Addis Ababa.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

The study made use of both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

In order to investigate the complex and multifaceted nature of leadership practices in educational offices, this research adopted a mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This approach was intentionally selected to take advantage of the strengths and compensate for the limitations of each individual method, thereby allowing for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem.

The qualitative component of the study enabled the collection of rich, descriptive and in depth data, particularly through semi structured interviews with sub-city and woreda educational office heads. This aspect of the study focused on capturing participants' lived experiences, interpretations and perspectives regarding the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles. The qualitative approach is particularly suited to exploring subjective elements such as beliefs, values, motivations, institutional culture, communication patterns and power dynamics all of which are crucial to understanding leadership behaviors and decision-making in public educational institutions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016).

As leadership is a context sensitive phenomenon that operates within dynamic and socially constructed environments, qualitative inquiry allowed the researcher to interpret meanings within their real life settings. Moreover, the open ended nature of qualitative interviews provided flexibility to probe deeper into unexpected but relevant areas that emerged during conversations, thus uncovering hidden factors that would be difficult to capture using only structured instruments. Complementing the qualitative data, the quantitative component was essential for capturing measurable and generalizable insights. It involved the use of structured questionnaires distributed to staff members working within the selected sub-city and woreda education offices. Quantitative data collection enabled the study to quantify patterns of responses, assess the frequency of particular leadership practices and evaluate staff perceptions across a broader sample. This, allowed the researcher to statistically analyze trends and relationships between variables related to leadership style implementation, institutional challenges and prospects for improvement. By using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study achieved triangulation, which refers to the process of corroborating findings across different data sources and methods to enhance validity, reliability and credibility (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016).

This methodological integration strengthens the overall integrity of the research by ensuring that the data is not one dimensional or method bound. To effectively guide the data collection and analysis processes, the research employed a qualitative case study design as the main research design. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). In this study, the bounded system is defined as the educational offices located within selected sub cities and woredas of Addis Ababa. These administrative units were purposefully selected due to their institutional relevance and potential to provide meaningful data concerning leadership implementation and challenges in the local education management structure. The case study design was particularly appropriate for this study because it enabled the researcher to examine the how and why of leadership practices in a

real institutional context, rather than limiting the focus to abstract variables or generalized conclusions. It allowed for a detailed exploration of leadership dynamics across multiple administrative levels and facilitated the interpretation of interrelated factors such as organizational structure, communication flows, stakeholder participation and decision making processes. As stated by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012), case studies are powerful in capturing the complexity and uniqueness of specific organizational settings, making them especially suitable for applied education research. Furthermore, the case study approach supported the investigation of multiple units of analysis including both sub-city and woreda level educational offices which enhanced the depth and breadth of the study. Each case (i.e., each educational office) served as a small scale version for examining leadership realities in Addis Ababa, enabling the researcher to identify commonalities, variations and context specific factors influencing leadership implementation.

In summary, the research design was intentionally structured to achieve a holistic and integrated perspective on leadership styles within educational management practices in Addis Ababa. The qualitative case study design, supported by quantitative measures, ensured that the findings would be both contextualized and informative. This dual approach not only offered a deeper understanding of how democratic and authoritarian leadership styles are applied in practice, but also highlighted the challenges and opportunities faced by educational leaders in their search to improve institutional performance, staff engagement and policy implementation.

Table 1 Population, Samples Size and Sampling Technique

No	Types of Respondents	Total Population	Sample Size No. %	Sampling Technique	Remark
1	Sub-City Education Heads	11	3 100%	Purposive	All planned sub-city heads were interviewed.
2	District Education Heads	119	4 66.7%	Purposive	Planned to interview 6; 4 were successfully interviewed.
3	Educational Office Staff (Questionnaire)	50 -60	43 100%	Availability	exceeds the standard minimum of 30 for analysis

3.4.4. Triangulation for Data Credibility

To improve the credibility and validity of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed. Triangulation is a validation strategy that involves comparing and corroborating evidence from different sources or methods to build a coherent justification for themes and findings (Creswell, 2012). This approach helped strengthen the overall trustworthiness of the research results by conducting semi structured interviews with educational leaders to gather in depth qualitative data which allowed for rich insights into leadership styles and experiences directly from key informants (Creswell, 2012); Using questionnaires completed by staff members to collect supporting quantitative data, which provided a broader perspective and enabled descriptive statistical analysis that complemented the detailed qualitative narratives and Comparing findings across multiple offices to identify patterns, discrepancies, and shared leadership experiences. By cross referencing information obtained through different methods and from various groups of participant's leaders and staff across different sub cities and districts the study was able to identify consistent themes and points of divergence, thereby increasing the validity of the conclusions (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., n.d.).

This methodological triangulation, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative questionnaires and comparing data across different settings, provided a more comprehensive understanding of leadership styles, challenges and prospects in the educational contexts of Addis Ababa.

3.5. Data Collection Methods

To explore participants' perspectives on the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles, semi structured interviews were conducted with educational leaders from selected sub city and woreda educational offices. The interview guide included open ended questions focusing on leadership practices; challenges encountered and perceived impacts of different leadership styles (Creswell, 2012). The use of open ended questions allowed participants to freely express their views, providing rich, in depth insights into their experiences and perceptions, which shows the qualitative research designed that explore complex phenomena (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., n.d.).

3.6. Piloting of the Questionnaire

In addition to interviews, a structured questionnaire was administered to educational staff members working within the selected educational offices. The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on staff perceptions of leadership styles, challenges in implementation, and prospects for improvement (Creswell, 2012). It consisted of closed ended questions with Likert scale options, enabling consistent responses and facilitating statistical analysis. This is a common practice in quantitative research to quantify attitudes and perceptions and to allow for meaningful comparisons (Gay et al., n.d.; Marczyk et al., 2005).

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were carefully developed based on relevant literature and the research objectives. The items were then reviewed by the study advisor and other professionals in educational leadership and research methods, and their feedback was incorporated to refine the questions and ensure they accurately measured the intended constructs. Content validity ensures that the instrument adequately covers all aspects of the concepts being studied (Creswell, 2012).

Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of staff members from educational offices not included in the main study. This allowed for refinement of items for clarity, relevance and language appropriateness. Adjustments were made based on the pilot results to improve the precision and comprehensibility of the instrument (Creswell, 2012).

To enhance reliability, consistent administration procedures were followed and questionnaires were delivered and collected in person to ensure a high response rate and completeness of data. Reliability refers to the consistency of the instrument in measuring the constructs across different respondents and situations (Marczyk et al., 2005).

These steps contributed to ensuring that the questionnaire used in this study was both valid and reliable, strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the quantitative findings.

3.7. Data Analysis

3.7.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic approach particularly suitable for qualitative data that aims to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within data (Creswell, 2012). The process involved several stages, following established qualitative research practices. First, familiarization with the data was achieved by reading interview transcripts and reviewing notes taken during the data collection process. This initial immersion in the data is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' narratives (Creswell, 2012). Second, initial coding was carried out by categorizing relevant statements related to leadership styles, challenges, and prospects. This stage involved breaking down the data into meaningful units and assigning labels or codes to segments of text that conveyed a particular idea or concept (Creswell, 2012). Third, these initial codes were organized into broader themes that captured recurring patterns across participants' responses. This process involved grouping similar codes together to form overarching themes that represented significant ideas or concepts within the data set (Gay et al., n.d.). Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data. This iterative process involved checking the themes against the original data to ensure their coherence and distinctiveness (Creswell, 2012). Finally, each theme was clearly defined and named to enable a coherent and transparent presentation of the findings. This clear articulation of themes helps in interpreting the data and presenting the results in an organized manner (Creswell, 2012). Through this rigorous thematic analysis, patterns and nuances were identified regarding the application of different leadership styles and their impact

on educational practices within the selected offices, providing rich qualitative insights into the research problem.

3.7.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including mean scores, frequencies and percentages (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016; Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire employed a 5 point likert scale to assess respondents' level of agreement with various statements concerning the implementation of leadership styles, challenges encountered, and prospects for leadership improvement in educational offices. Each item was rated on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Mean scores were calculated to determine the overall trend of responses and identify the average perception of each item. Frequencies and percentages were used to display the distribution of responses across the different levels of agreement, offering a clear picture of how staff members perceived each aspect of leadership (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

This quantitative analysis allowed the researcher to quantify staff perceptions and compare responses across different dimensions of the study. Moreover, the quantitative findings were used to support and triangulate the qualitative data obtained through interviews, thereby enhancing the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research results.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Qualitative analysis of Data on Leadership

This section presents a thematic analysis of interview data gathered from woreda and sub-city educational leaders. The responses are organized under three key themes: implementation of leadership styles, challenges encountered and prospects for improvement. The analysis reflects patterns and insights that emerged across the interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method particularly suited for qualitative inquiry (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016; Creswell, 2014) The process involved several stages:

- a. Familiarization with the data: We became familiar with the data by reading interview transcripts and reviewing notes taken during the data collection process.
- b. Initial coding: Initial coding was conducted by categorizing relevant statements related to leadership styles, challenges and prospects.
- c. Theme grouping: These codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring patterns in participants' responses.
- d. Theme review and refinement: The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data.

Finally, each theme was clearly defined and named to enable a coherent and meaningful presentation of the findings.

Through this analysis, key patterns were identified regarding the application of different leadership styles and their impact on educational practices within the selected offices.

4.2. Participant's Profile

A total of seven educational leaders were interviewed for this study, representing both sub-city and woreda educational offices in Addis Ababa. Among the participants, three were heads of sub city educational offices, while four were heads of woreda educational offices. All participants hold leadership roles responsible for overseeing educational administration, policy implementation and coordination with schools within their respective jurisdictions.

The leaders have varied levels of experience, with most having substantial time in their current roles. Their backgrounds include formal education in areas such as management, political science and related fields, combined with practical leadership experience. This combination contributes to their understanding of both the strategic and operational aspects of educational

governance. The sample was purposively selected to capture a diverse perspective on leadership practices across different administrative levels within Addis Ababa's education offices.

This participant composition provides a comprehensive view of leadership styles and challenges at multiple levels of the education administration, ensuring that the data reflects the complexity and diversity of leadership within the local educational context.

4.3. Leadership Style Implementation

The interview data revealed a strong preference for democratic leadership among the majority of educational leaders in both sub-city and woreda offices. Out of the seven leaders interviewed, six explicitly identified their leadership style as democratic, while one described using a mixed approach. The leader who used a mixed style explained, "It is a democratic government, and we should align with the government." This response suggests that for some leaders, leadership style is influenced not only by personal conviction but also by the broader political and governance context of Ethiopia.

For those identifying as democratic leaders, the rationale went beyond simple preference. Respondents repeatedly emphasized values such as participation, inclusiveness and open communication. One sub city leader noted, "We believe every voice should be heard before we decide on important issues." Another leader explained, "Democratic leadership builds trust and helps everyone feel responsible for the work." These statements illustrate that democratic leadership is perceived not only as a governance style but as a strategic approach to achieving institutional goals through collective engagement.

A key feature of this democratic approach is collaborative decision making. All leaders regardless of whether they described themselves as purely democratic or mixed stressed that decisions are made collectively. Common phrases included, "We decide everything together," and "No decision is made without discussing it with the team." This indicates that, in practice, participatory governance is embedded in the daily operations of these offices. Leaders described processes where proposals are openly discussed, alternative viewpoints are considered and final decisions are reached through consensus.

Communication emerged as another central element in the implementation of leadership styles. All respondents described using a combination of formal and informal channels to relay policies, expectations, and directives to schools. Formal methods include regularly scheduled meetings, circular letters, and official reporting procedures. Informal and faster methods leverage technology particularly Telegram and WhatsApp groups, as well as phone calls to ensure information reaches stakeholders promptly. One woreda leader stated, "We have formal meetings regularly, but we also use technology to pass information quickly." Another added, "Sometimes urgent matters cannot wait for meetings, so we use digital platforms to inform schools immediately."

Respondents also highlighted the importance of clear governance structures in facilitating leadership implementation. Several leaders referred to operating under proclamation based guidelines, which outline the responsibilities of each office and the expected communication flow. This formal framework ensures that participatory leadership is supported by structured processes rather than being ad hoc.

The inclusion of teachers, principals, and administrative staff in decision making was consistently reported. Leaders noted that these stakeholders contribute valuable insights from their direct interaction with students and parents, making their input critical in shaping educational strategies. One sub city head remarked, “The people in the schools know the challenges firsthand, so we make sure they have a say in our planning.”

Many leaders also mentioned attending periodic leadership training provided through governmental or NGO initiatives. These trainings were viewed as beneficial in strengthening their ability to apply democratic principles in practice, improve conflict resolution and manage participatory decision making effectively.

Overall, the data suggest that democratic leadership, as practiced in Addis Ababa’s sub city and woreda educational offices, is characterized by inclusiveness, structured communication, and collective responsibility. While influenced by the national governance context, it is also deeply rooted in the belief that shared decision making produces better outcomes and stronger commitment from all stakeholders involved.

4.4. Challenges in Applying Leadership Styles

Although democratic leadership is widely valued among educational leaders in Addis Ababa’s sub-city and woreda educational offices, interview data indicate that its consistent application is hindered by several interrelated challenges.

The most prominent challenge reported by all seven leaders was resource limitation. This includes inadequate budgets, insufficient educational materials and a lack of technical tools required to implement agreed upon plans. As one woreda head put it, “We plan together, but without the materials or budget, it’s difficult to make those plans a reality.” The participatory nature of democratic leadership often results in well-developed plans based on input from multiple stakeholders, but the absence of adequate resources can reduce the impact of these collaborative decisions.

In addition to resource shortages, interpersonal challenges were also mentioned, though less frequently. One woreda leader noted that there can sometimes be “misunderstandings among staff” which, while not necessarily linked to refusal or unwillingness to cooperate, can delay decision making or require additional effort to resolve. However, all leaders emphasize that they generally maintain very good interaction with their teams and any disagreements are exceptions rather than the norm.

When asked about resistance from staff during the implementation of decisions, leaders unanimously reported addressing it through discussion and awareness building. One respondent explained, “We don’t impose decisions; we sit down and talk until everyone understands.” This approach reflects a commitment to the principles of democratic leadership, where dialogue is used to foster understanding and alignment.

Another factor affecting the effective application of leadership styles is the broader institutional and cultural environment. In some cases, staff members may not fully understand the office’s strategic goals, leading to slower adoption of new initiatives. Additionally, occasional external influences or personal interests were mentioned as factors that can disrupt teamwork and mutual trust.

None of the leaders perceived higher level authorities as a barrier to implementing their preferred leadership style. On the contrary, several leaders stated that they felt they had sufficient autonomy to make decisions within their jurisdiction. The consistent positive feedback received from schools and staff was cited as further evidence that, despite challenges, their democratic approach is both appreciated and effective.

Overall, while resource constraints remain the dominant obstacle, leaders’ reliance on open communication, dialogue and relationship building appears to ease many potential challenges. This resilience reinforces the role of participatory leadership as both a guiding principle and a practical tool for managing educational offices in Addis Ababa.

4.5. Prospects for Leadership Improvement

Interview findings revealed a strong sense of optimism among educational leaders regarding the future of leadership practices in Addis Ababa’s sub city and woreda educational offices. Several key areas for improvement were identified, focusing on both institutional development and the personal growth of leaders.

One of the most frequently mentioned prospects was enhanced training in technology. Leaders highlighted that the growing use of digital platforms for communication with schools and staff could be made more efficient through targeted training. As one sub city leader remarked, “We use technology every day, but more training would help us use it effectively for leadership, not just for passing information.”

Strengthening institutional capacity was also viewed as a priority. Respondents suggested investing in administrative systems, improving resource allocation and streamlining processes to make decision making more efficient. Linked to this was the call for human resource development, particularly in the areas of leadership skills, conflict resolution and participatory decision making.

Leaders also emphasized increasing community involvement in education as a way to build stronger partnerships and encourage shared responsibility for educational outcomes. One woreda

leader noted, “If parents and the community are more involved, it makes our leadership more effective because we are not working in isolation.”

When discussing leadership style preferences, the majority of respondents strongly supported maintaining a democratic approach as the primary model for governance. They viewed it as essential for sustainable development in the education sector because it fosters trust, collaboration and shared accountability. A few leaders acknowledged that incorporating elements of laissez faire leadership could be beneficial in specific situations particularly when delegating tasks to highly experienced or self-motivated staff. However, there was a clear consensus against authoritarian practices, with leaders expressing concern that such an approach could undermine trust and participation.

In response to the question of whether balancing democratic and authoritarian styles would improve governance, most respondents opposed the idea, arguing that authoritarian methods are inconsistent with the current governance framework and cultural expectations in Ethiopia’s education system. Instead, they suggested greater flexibility within the democratic framework, allowing leaders to adapt their approach based on context without compromising the core values of participation and inclusivity.

Overall, the prospects for leadership improvement identified by the respondents point toward a capacity building and empowerment oriented strategy one that strengthens leaders’ skills, fosters community engagement and improves the institutional environment.

4.6. Summary of Key Findings

The thematic analysis of interview data identified three core areas related to leadership practices in Addis Ababa’s educational offices: the implementation of leadership styles, challenges encountered and prospects for improvement.

Most leaders identified democratic leadership as their preferred style, emphasizing inclusive decision making, open communication and collective responsibility. This participatory approach is seen as critical for fostering trust and cooperation among staff and schools.

However, despite the positive orientation toward democratic leadership, several challenges were consistently reported. The most significant barrier was limited resources including inadequate budgets, materials and technical tools that constrain the effective execution of plans. Other issues such as occasional interpersonal misunderstandings and varying levels of staff understanding of institutional goals also affected leadership effectiveness. Notably, resistance from staff was generally low and managed through dialogue and awareness-building.

Looking forward, leaders expressed optimism about improving leadership effectiveness through enhanced technology training, strengthened institutional capacity and greater community involvement. There was strong consensus in favor of maintaining democratic leadership, with

some openness to integrating flexible elements of other styles in specific contexts. However, authoritarian approaches were largely rejected.

Overall, these findings suggest that while democratic leadership is valued and practiced, ongoing support and capacity-building are essential to overcome resource and institutional challenges and to promote sustainable educational governance.

4.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

This chapter presents, analyzes and interprets the data collected from respondents in selected sub city and woreda educational offices in Addis Ababa. The aim is to examine the implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in educational management practices, as well as to identify the challenges and prospects associated with these styles.

In line with the case study research design, qualitative data were primarily collected through interviews with educational office heads to gain in depth insights into leadership practices. A total of seven interviews were conducted: three with sub city education office heads and four with woreda education office heads. To ensure credibility and enrich the findings through triangulation, supplementary quantitative data were collected using questionnaires. A total of 43 questionnaires were completed by staff members from both sub city and district educational offices. These responses support the qualitative findings by providing broader perspectives from employees involved in day to day educational management.

Quantitative data are presented using tables, frequencies and percentages while qualitative responses are thematically analyzed. The analysis is guided by the research questions and interpreted in light of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks discussed in earlier chapters.

The chapter begins by outlining the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by findings organized under key thematic areas: leadership styles practiced implementation of democratic and authoritarian leadership, challenges encountered and the prospects for improving leadership in educational offices.

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic background of respondents is essential for interpreting the data in the context of their roles, experiences and perspectives in educational leadership. This section presents the respondents' gender, age, educational qualifications, work experience and positions in the educational offices.

To better contextualize these characteristics, it is important to note the basic structure of the educational offices involved in this study. Each sub city educational office is typically organized under a sub city education office head, followed by coordinators, teams, team leaders, experts and supervisors. These offices are responsible for overseeing secondary education and aligning sub city level goals with broader city educational policies.

Similarly, woreda educational offices which manage primary education at the local level are led by woreda education heads, supported by teams, team leaders, experts and supervisors. Both structures are consistently applied across all sub-city and woreda offices in Addis Ababa, providing a standardized framework for administrative and leadership functions within the city’s education sector.

This structural context helps explain the range of leadership roles represented in the study and supports a deeper understanding of how demographic factors might influence perspectives on leadership styles, challenges, and improvement prospects.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

No.	Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age	20–30 years	2	4.7%
		31–40 years	31	72.1%
		41–50 years	8	18.6%
		51 years and above	2	4.7%
2	Sex	Male	27	62.8%
		Female	16	37.2%
3	Educational Qualification	Diploma		
		Degree	24	55.8%
		Master's Degree	19	44.2%
		PhD		
4	Job Responsibility	Coordinator	4	9.3%
		Team Leader	14	32.6%
		Experts	19	44.2%
		Supervisor	6	14%
			5	14%
5	Work Experience	5–10 years	11	25.6%
		11–15 years	12	27.9%
		16 years and above	20	46.5%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 43 respondents participated in the study from selected sub-city and woreda educational offices in Addis Ababa. In terms of sex, the majority of respondents are male (62.8%), while females make up 37.2% of the total sample.

Regarding age distribution, 72.1% of the participants are within the 31–40 age range, making this the most represented group. This is followed by 4.7% aged 20–30, 18.6% aged 41–50, and 4.7% aged above 50.

Regarding educational qualifications, 55.8% of the respondents hold a degree, 44.2% possess a master's degree. This suggests a relatively well educated workforce, with a substantial portion having postgraduate education, which is beneficial for leadership and decision making roles in education management.

Job responsibilities data indicate that the largest group of respondents are experts (44.2%), followed by team leaders (32.6%), supervisors (14%) and coordinators (9.3%). This distribution shows that the majority of participants are involved in technical and leadership roles.

Work experience data show that 46.5% of respondents have more than 16 years of experience, suggesting a highly experienced workforce. Additionally, 27.9% have between 11–15 years, and 25.6% have 5–10 years of experience. This indicates that the respondents are largely seasoned professionals, which may influence how leadership styles are perceived and implemented in their respective offices.

4.2.2. Leadership Style Practice and Staff Engagement

This section presents analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the leadership style predominantly practiced within their educational offices. It explores several key dimensions of leadership as experienced by staff, including the extent to which leaders consult employees in decision making processes, the communication methods utilized within the offices and the degree to which staff are empowered and motivated under the current leadership framework.

The data for this section were collected from a total of 43 respondents drawn from both woreda and sub-city educational offices. These respondents represent a diverse range of roles within the education office structure, including heads of offices, coordinators, team leaders, experts and supervisors. Their perspectives provide valuable insight into the practical realities of leadership application and its impact on staff engagement and institutional performance.

By examining how leadership is perceived and experienced by those working directly within these offices, this section aims to highlight the effectiveness of current practices, identify patterns of participatory or hierarchical leadership and assess the extent to which leadership contributes to creating a motivating, inclusive and communicative work environment.

Table 3 Summary of the responses for each item.

Items	Response Options	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Most commonly practiced leadership style	Authoritarian	5	11.6%
	Democratic	15	34.9%
	Mixed	23	53.5%
Consultation before key decisions	Always	5	11.6%
	Often	8	18.6%
	Sometimes	14	32.6%
	Rarely	13	30.2%
	Never	3	7.0%
Leaders communication style	Open and participatory	12	27.9%
	Partially inclusive	18	41.9%
	Top-down	10	23.3%
	No clear structure	3	7.0%
Staff empowerment level	Strongly Agree	10	23.3%
	Agree	16	37.2%
	Neutral	7	16.3%
	Disagree	9	20.9%
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.3%
Staff motivation	Very High	3	7.0%
	High	12	27.9%
	Moderate	18	41.9%
	Low	6	14.0%
	Very Low	4	9.3%

Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the questionnaire responses; it reveals that a mixed leadership style is most commonly practiced in the educational offices, as indicated by over half of the respondents (53.5%). This suggests that leaders tend to blend elements of different leadership approaches rather than following strictly one style. A significant portion (34.9%) also identified democratic leadership as prevalent, reflecting a reasonable degree of participatory decision making, authoritarian leadership was the least reported (11.6%). When it comes to leader consultation before making key decisions, most respondents stated that they are consulted only “sometimes” (32.6%) or “rarely” (30.2%), showing that staff input is not regularly sought in

many offices. This limited consultation is further supported by findings on communication style, where 41.9% described leadership communication as “partially inclusive with limited discussion,” and only 27.9% experienced open and participatory communication.

Despite these limitations, many staff members reported feeling empowered to contribute ideas, with 60.5% either agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, a notable portion of respondents felt neutral, suggesting inconsistency in how leaders encourage participation. Regarding employee motivation, most participants rated it as moderate (41.9%) and high (27.9%), indicating that while the current leadership styles are somewhat effective in maintaining motivation, there remains room for improvement, particularly for the 23.3% who rated motivation as low or very low. Overall, the results suggest that while some elements of democratic leadership are present, the full benefits of participatory leadership are not consistently realized across all offices, pointing to the need for more inclusive, empowering, and communicative leadership practices.

4.2.3. Challenges in Leadership Practices

This section presents the challenges respondents face in their educational offices due to leadership practices. The responses highlight issues that may hinder effective leadership implementation and overall office performance.

The following table summarizes staff perceptions of key leadership challenges using a 5-point Likert scale, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The percentages reflect the proportion of respondents selecting each response category.

Table 4 problems staffs face at their workplace due to leadership practices

Items	1 (SD)	(%)	2 (D)	(%)	3 (N)	(%)	4 (A)	(%)	5 (SA)	(%)	Mean Score
a. Lack of clear communication	4	9.3%	8	18.6%	17	39.5%	8	18.6%	6	14%	3.09
b. Limited participation in decision-making	0	0.0%	14	32.6%	20	46.5%	4	9.3%	5	11.6%	3.09
c. Inconsistent leadership style	10	23.3%	11	25.6%	12	27.9%	7	16.3%	3	7%	2.75
d. Resistance to change	10	23.3%	7	16.3%	10	23.3%	10	23.3%	5	11.6%	2.98
e. Insufficient recognition of employees' efforts	10	23.3%	5	11.6%	10	23.3%	10	23.3%	3	7%	2.95

The data collected from 43 respondents highlights various challenges experienced in leadership practices within the education offices. The respondents rated each challenge on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with mean scores indicating the overall intensity of agreement.

a. Lack of clear communication

This challenge received a mean score of 3.09, indicating a moderate level of agreement. While 39.5% of respondents remained neutral, a combined 33.2% agreed or strongly agreed that unclear communication is a problem, reflecting its significance as a barrier to effective leadership.

b. Limited participation in decision-making

Also scoring a mean of 3.09, this item reflects a similar concern. Nearly half (46.5%) were neutral, but 21% agreed or strongly agreed that limited participation is an issue. Notably, no respondents strongly disagreed, emphasizing the general recognition of this challenge.

c. Inconsistent leadership style

This challenge scored lower, with a mean of 2.75, indicating fewer consensuses on its severity. A substantial portion (48.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that inconsistent leadership style is a major problem, suggesting mixed experiences across respondents

d. Resistance to change

Scoring a mean of 2.98, the perception of resistance to change is moderate but slightly less prominent. Opinions were evenly split with about 39.5% disagreeing and 34.9% agreeing, highlighting variability in how change is managed in different offices.

e. Insufficient recognition of employees' efforts

With a mean score of 2.95, this challenge is moderately perceived by respondents. Responses are fairly balanced across agreement and disagreement, indicating inconsistent practices in recognizing employee contributions.

4.2.4. Prospects for Leadership Improvement

This section analyzes respondents' views on how leadership practices in educational offices can be improved, including preferences for leadership style changes, methods for enhancing effectiveness and the desired balance between leadership authority and participation.

The table below presents staff perceptions of key improvement measures for leadership effectiveness in Addis Ababa's educational offices. Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 5 Respondents' Ratings of Key Leadership Improvement Measures in Educational Offices

Improvement Measures	1 (SD)	(%)	2 (D)	(%)	3 (N)	(%)	4 (A)	(%)	5 (SA)	(%)	Mean Score
a. Make decisions more participatory	3	7.0%	3	7.0%	10	23.3%	10	23.3%	17	39.5%	3.81
b. Provide regular leadership training	3	7.0%	3	7.0%	5	11.6%	11	25.6%	21	48.8%	4.01
c. Establish clearer lines of communication	3	7.0%	4	9.3%	4	9.3%	12	27.9%	20	46.5%	3.91
d. Take stronger accountability measures	3	7.0%	6	14.0%	11	25.6%	10	23.3%	13	30.2%	3.61

Table 5 presents respondents' ratings of key leadership improvement measures in educational offices, based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Frequencies and percentages for each response category are provided alongside the mean scores.

a. Make decisions more participatory

With a mean score of 3.81, this item shows strong agreement among respondents. Approximately 62.8% (27 out of 43) agreed or strongly agreed that more participatory decision-making is essential for improving leadership.

b. Provide regular leadership training

This measure received the highest mean score of 4.01, indicating it is the most favored improvement. Nearly 74.4% (32 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed on the importance of ongoing leadership development and capacity building.

c. Establish clearer lines of communication

This measure also garnered strong support with a mean score of 3.91. Similar to leadership training, 74.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that clearer communication channels are critical for effective leadership.

d. Take stronger accountability measures

Although still recognized as important (mean score 3.61), responses to this item were more mixed. About 20.9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the need for stronger accountability measures, while 53.5% agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests accountability is an area needing attention, though possibly less urgently than training or communication.

Table 6 Respondents' Preferences on Leadership Style in Educational Offices

Preferred Leadership Style	1 (SD)	%(SD)	2 (SA)	%(SA)	3 (N)	%(N)	4 (A)	%(A)	5 (SA)	%(SA)	Mean Score
a. Leadership should remain as it is	25	58.1%	2	4.7%	5	11.6%	10	23.3%	1	2.3%	2.00
b. Move toward more democratic practices	2	4.7%	3	7.0%	5	11.6%	10	23.3%	23	53.5%	4.16
c. Balance leaders' and team decision-making rights	3	7.0%	2	4.7%	3	7.0%	15	34.9%	20	46.5%	4.09
d. Use flexible leadership styles as needed	2	4.7%	3	7.0%	2	4.7%	13	30.2%	23	53.5%	4.18

4.4 Leadership Styles Practiced in Educational Offices

The findings from both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaire responses suggest that leadership styles within Addis Ababa's educational offices are predominantly democratic, although the practical application of this style varies significantly. While many leaders report favoring a participatory approach, challenges such as limited communication, inconsistent consultation and institutional constraints hinder the full realization of democratic leadership principles.

4.4.1 Implementation of Democratic Leadership Style

According to interview responses, nearly all sub-city and woreda education heads identified their leadership style as democratic. The leaders emphasized that their approach aligns with the national governance framework and is suited to modern educational demands. One woreda leader, however, acknowledged using a mixed leadership style to adapt to contextual demands.

Leaders explained that they facilitate decision-making through inclusive discussions and team-based processes. Communication is maintained through formal meetings and digital platforms, supported by structures outlined in national proclamations. Staff members, including principals and experts, are reportedly involved in shaping office-level decisions. Leadership training was also mentioned as a valuable tool that positively influenced their management practices.

Despite these ideals, the questionnaire data paints a more nuanced picture. While 34.9% of respondents believed that democratic leadership is practiced in their offices, the majority (53.5%) described the style as mixed. Only 11.6% of staff identified the approach as authoritarian. Furthermore, consultation before decision-making is reportedly inconsistent; 32.6% said they were “sometimes” consulted, while 30.2% reported they were “rarely” involved in key decisions. These figures suggest a gap between leaders’ intentions and the staff’s actual experiences.

4.4.1.1 Participatory Decision-Making

From the qualitative data, leaders agreed on the importance of involving staff in the decision making process. This was supported by 60.5% of survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they are empowered to contribute ideas. However, 18.6% felt neutral and 20.9% disagreed to some extent, indicating inconsistency in practice. Additionally, 32.6% of respondents said they are “sometimes” consulted before decisions are made, while another 30.2% said they are “rarely” consulted. This highlights a disconnection between the ideal of participation and the frequency with which it is actually implemented.

Improvement measures suggested by respondents included "making decisions more participatory," which scored a mean of 3.81, with 62.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This shows a clear demand from staff for more involvement in key office decisions.

4.4.1.2 Communication Practices

Communication was identified as both a core component of democratic leadership and an area in need of improvement. Interviewed leaders stated that they use meetings, official guidelines, and digital tools to ensure clear communication. However, 41.9% of staff described the communication style as "partially inclusive with limited discussion," while only 27.9% experienced open and participatory communication.

Quantitative results also underscore this gap. The challenge item “Lack of clear communication” received a mean score of 3.09. While 39.5% of respondents remained neutral, a combined 33.2% agreed or strongly agreed that unclear communication is a problem. This suggests that while structures for communication exist, their effectiveness may vary across offices.

Respondents strongly supported the improvement measure “establish clearer lines of communication,” which received a mean of 3.91 and 74.4% agreement. This demonstrates widespread recognition of communication as a critical area for leadership improvement.

4.4.1.3 Staff Participation and Empowerment

Empowering staff was another recurring theme. Leaders stated that teachers, principals, and other employees are involved in decision-making and have input in office-level discussions. Most leaders also noted that staff motivation and performance improve when they feel heard and included.

Quantitative data reflected this as well. About 60.5% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they feel empowered to share their ideas. However, 18.6% felt neutral, and 20.9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, pointing again to inconsistencies in empowerment practices across different offices. Additionally, the leadership challenge “Limited participation in decision making” scored a mean of 3.09. Although 46.5% of respondents were neutral, 21% agreed or strongly agreed that participation is insufficient. Notably, none strongly disagreed, suggesting a general awareness of the issue even among those less directly affected. In open-ended responses, many staff recommended that leaders allow greater participation in decisions, avoid politicized appointments, and maintain transparency. These responses reinforce the need for inclusive and empowering leadership practices rooted in merit and professionalism.

4.4.2 Implementation of Authoritarian Leadership Style

Although most leaders in Addis Ababa’s educational offices identify as democratic in their leadership approach, evidence from the quantitative data and open-ended responses reveals that elements of authoritarian leadership are still present in practice. While only 11.6% of respondents explicitly recognized authoritarian leadership as the dominant style in their offices, several indicators suggest that top-down behaviors persist.

From the questionnaire results, 32.6% of staff stated they are only “sometimes” consulted before key decisions, and 30.2% said they are “rarely” consulted, indicating that nearly two-thirds of staff feel excluded from the decision-making process. Additionally, 41.9% of respondents described communication as “partially inclusive with limited discussion.” These patterns are characteristic of authoritarian leadership, where leaders control most decisions without sufficient input from subordinates.

Moreover, open-ended responses highlighted concerns about politicized leader appointments, lack of inclusiveness, and leaders who do not fully understand educational work, further reinforcing the sense of hierarchical, non-participatory management in some offices.

4.4.2.1 Top-Down Decision-Making

The persistence of top-down decision-making is a notable concern across the data. Despite leaders’ self-identification with democratic styles, many staff members experience directive leadership, where instructions are passed down without meaningful dialogue.

This discrepancy may be influenced by: Systemic issues such as appointment of leaders without relevant field expertise, institutional culture which still leans toward hierarchy and compliance rather than collaboration, Limited leadership training, as noted in both interview and questionnaire responses.

The quantitative data confirms this gap: only 27.9% of respondents characterized leadership communication as open and participatory, while 60.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they are empowered to share ideas. This indicates inconsistencies in implementation across offices, where participatory ideals are not always translated into daily operations.

4.5 Challenges in Implementing Leadership Styles

This section examines the major challenges faced by educational office leaders in implementing effective leadership styles. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with district and sub-city officials, several recurring themes emerged, including resource limitations, resistance to change, cultural constraints, lack of training, and communication barriers. While the intensity of these challenges varies between sub-city and district levels, they all hinder the consistent application of democratic or adaptive leadership styles. Both the qualitative and quantitative findings reveal several challenges that hinder effective leadership style implementation:

From the Quantitative Data: Lack of clear communication (Mean = 3.09): A third of respondents agreed it was a problem, with nearly 40% neutral suggesting variability across offices. Limited participation in decision making (Mean = 3.09): With 21% agreeing/strongly agreeing and 46.5% neutral, this highlights a widespread but under addressed issue. Resistance to change (Mean = 2.98) and insufficient recognition of staff efforts (Mean = 2.95) also surfaced as barriers.

From the Qualitative Data: Cultural resistance to democratic leadership Staff misunderstandings of institutional goals, self-interest and external political influence, leadership appointment based on unfair factors. These challenges indicate both structural and behavioral obstacles to consistent and effective leadership practices.

4.6 Prospects for Effective Leadership Implementation

Despite the challenges identified, findings from both the quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interviews reveal encouraging prospects for improving leadership practices within Addis Ababa's educational offices. These prospects reflect a shared goal among staff and leaders for more effective, inclusive and responsive leadership approaches.

One of the prominent prospects is the provision of regular leadership training, which received the highest level of agreement among questionnaire respondents (Mean = 4.01; 74.4% agreement). Such training is essential for enhancing leaders' competencies in communication, participatory decision-making, conflict resolution and strategic planning. It also supports the shift from rigid, top-down leadership models to more adaptive and democratic leadership practices that encourage

collaboration and innovation. Interviewed leaders also emphasized the need for ongoing professional development to align leadership practices with modern educational expectations.

Another key area for improvement is clearer communication, which also received strong support from respondents (Mean = 3.91; 74.4% agreement). Effective communication fosters transparency, builds trust and ensures that staff are informed and engaged in the day to day activities of the organization. Strengthening communication channels supports democratic leadership by facilitating open dialogue, feedback sharing and collective problem-solving. Participatory decision-making emerged as a significant prospect for leadership improvement, with 62.8% agreement from respondents (Mean = 3.81). Engaging staff in decision-making processes increases their sense of ownership, accountability and motivation. It also leads to more informed and widely accepted decisions. Interview data confirmed that leaders who practice participatory approaches are more likely to gain staff support and improve organizational performance. In addition, the establishment of accountability mechanisms was identified as a key area for development (Mean = 3.61). Implementing transparent performance evaluation and feedback systems helps ensure that leaders and staff uphold responsibilities and maintain high standards. Such mechanisms also promote ethical leadership and reinforce a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement.

A notable insight from the qualitative data was the emphasis on technological capacity building as a critical enabler of effective leadership. Leaders advocated for the increased use of digital tools and platforms to support administrative functions, data management and internal communication. Integrating technology into leadership practice enhances efficiency, facilitates informed decision making and enables broader engagement with staff and stakeholders. For instance, digital communication tools can streamline meetings, track progress and foster real time collaboration, supporting a more flexible and responsive leadership style. Interviewed leaders also stressed the importance of structured human resource development. This includes merit based recruitment, regular capacity building initiatives and career development programs aimed at strengthening staff competence and morale. When staffs are supported in their professional growth, they are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the organization and support its leadership vision. Lastly, community involvement in educational decision making was highlighted as a valuable prospect. Leaders noted that fostering stronger partnerships with parents, community members, and local organizations enhances transparency, accountability and relevance in policy implementation. Engaging external stakeholders not only strengthens the legitimacy of leadership decisions but also reflects the values of democratic leadership and community ownership. In summary, while the study identified several challenges in implementing effective leadership styles, both staff and leaders expressed a strong readiness for reform. The integration of leadership training, improved communication, participatory decision making, accountability, technological advancement, structured human resource development and community engagement offers a promising pathway for cultivating more effective leadership practices within Addis Ababa's educational offices.

4.7 Consolidated responses from the open-ended items of the questionnaire

1. Recommendations for Improving the Management of Education Offices in Addis Ababa

Respondents provided several recommendations that emphasize the need for professionalization, fairness and participatory leadership in the management of educational offices:

Merit-Based Appointments: Many participants stressed that leadership roles should be assigned based on individuals' educational background and professional qualifications rather than political affiliation.

Leadership Training: Several responses emphasized the importance of equipping educational leaders with proper training in leadership and management.

Transparent and Inclusive Governance: Participants called for improved communication, greater transparency in leadership decisions, and more opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making processes.

Stability in Leadership Positions: Some respondents expressed concern over the frequent turnover of leaders, stating that leaders should be allowed sufficient time in office to make a meaningful impact.

2. Perceived Effects of Current Leadership Styles on Educational Management and Performance

Participants noted several negative effects of the current leadership approach such as:

Lack of Field Expertise: Several respondents emphasized that a significant number of leaders in educational offices come from backgrounds unrelated to education or educational management. This means they may not have formal training in pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment strategies, or school administration. As a result, such leaders may struggle to:

Understand the operational realities of the education sector, including the unique challenges faced by teachers, school administrators, and students.

Interpret and implement educational policies effectively, since they might lack familiarity with pedagogical principles or the nuances of school governance.

Make informed decisions about teaching methods, learning materials or assessment standards as these decisions require an understanding of best practices in education.

Communicate effectively with educators, because they may not share the same professional terms or grasp of instructional priorities.

This lack of field expertise often leads to misaligned priorities, inefficient policy execution and reduced trust between leaders and staff. In some cases, it may also contribute to overreliance on authoritarian leadership styles, since leaders without sector knowledge may depend more on top down directives rather than collaborative problem solving.

Top down Decision-Making: lack of participatory decision making was reported to reduce staff engagement and motivation as most decisions are handed down without consultation.

Reduced Accountability and Motivation: Respondents noted that such leadership styles negatively affect employee responsibility and morale, ultimately lowering the quality of education and impacting student outcomes.

4.8 Interpretation of Key Findings

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data highlights a shared readiness for leadership reform within Addis Ababa's educational offices. Staff and leaders demonstrated strong support for professional development, improved communication and participatory leadership practices. The prominence of leadership training (Mean = 4.01; 74.4% agreement) and clear communication (Mean = 3.91; 74.4%) underscores a widespread desire to shift toward more transparent, collaborative approaches.

Qualitative insights added depth by identifying practical enablers such as technological tools, human resource development and stronger community involvement. Leaders recognized the importance of adaptable leadership, expressing preference for democratic styles while acknowledging the need for contextual flexibility.

Overall, the findings suggest an encouraging alignment between staff needs and leadership aspirations indicating that with targeted interventions, the conditions for more effective and inclusive leadership are already taking shape.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

In this study we examined the implementation, challenges and prospects of democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in the educational offices of Addis Ababa. The findings were organized around the following research questions, based on both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaire data:

1. Which leadership styles are predominantly practiced in Addis Ababa's educational offices? (Democratic, authoritarian or mixed)?

A majority of the leaders identified themselves as democratic in their leadership style; they indicate inclusiveness, involving their teams and alignment with national governance structures. However, the quantitative data shows that 53.5% of respondents take the leadership style as mixed, 34.9% identified it as democratic and 11.6% as authoritarian. This indicates that there is a gap between leaders' self-perception and how their leadership is experienced by staff.

2. In terms of decision making and communication, how are democratic and authoritarian leadership styles implemented within educational offices?

Leaders reported that they use participatory decision making and communication by formal meetings and digital platforms. However 27.9% of staff experienced fully open and participatory communication, 41.9% said it is only partially inclusive. Staff empowerment showed moderate success. 60.5% agree that they could contribute ideas, by consistent consultation before decision making was lacking.

3. What kind of challenges do educational leaders encounter when trying to apply democratic and authoritarian leadership styles?

The major challenges are lack of clear communication, limited participation in decision making and change resistance. The qualitative data indicates that there are issues like political appointments, lack of transparency and insufficient leadership training and lack of resources.

4. How do the staff members and the leaders describe their experiences with these leadership styles, particularly in relation to motivation, job satisfaction and how their organizations function?

Both staff and leaders described democratic leadership as the preferred style because it promotes motivation, increase job satisfaction and good for effective organizational functioning due to the participation and open communication. Authoritarian leadership was rarely used and generally linked to lower staff engagement. Despite some challenges, democratic practices were seen as

more effective overall. Leaders and staff recommended for good training, communication, stronger accountability and sustained participatory practices. In general, the leadership style which is strongly favored for the future was the democratic leadership style. And the authoritarian style was viewed negatively.

5.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings:

1. The preferred model among leaders and staff is the democratic leadership. However, its implementation is inconsistent across offices. The gap between leaders' intentions and staff experiences highlights that there is a need for more inclusive practices.
2. There are authoritarian tendencies, particularly in top down decision making and limited staff consultation. These tendencies blocks collaborative leadership and it can negatively affect morale and educational outcomes.
3. Leadership challenges are both structural and cultural. Poor communication, political interference and inadequate recognition of staff contributions issues are rooted in systemic practices that must be addressed to support effective leadership.
4. There is strong potential for leadership improvement. By good training, transparency in appointments and policies that reinforce participatory governance, leadership practices in education offices can significantly evolve.

5.3 Recommendations

Educational leaders are encouraged to develop participatory decision making by involving staff in planning and policy development consistently, this encourages staffs to have shared ownership of institutional goals. Improving communication practices to have clarity, openness and dialogue. This is very essential to build trust and reduce misunderstandings. Leaders should also engage in continuous professional development programs that focus on democratic and transformational leadership principles. In addition, leaders should also engage in professional development program that focus on sector specific knowledge in curriculum management, pedagogy and educational policy. This is important especially for leaders whose academic and professional background lies outside the education field. This equips them with the expertise needed to make informed decisions. Furthermore, recognizing and rewarding staff contributions can strengthen morale, encourage innovation, and promote a culture of appreciation within educational offices.

5.3.2 For the Addis Ababa Education Bureau

The Addis Ababa Education Bureau should make sure that leadership appointments are based on the relevant educational qualifications rather than political affiliation. To address the issue of leaders without a background in education, the Bureau should implement induction and training programs to cover the key areas such as curriculum management, educational policy, assessment

strategies and participatory leadership. To standardize the skills and knowledge required for leadership positions, establishment of a competency framework will help. Strengthening accountability mechanisms will promote transparency and help monitor leadership performance. In addition, promoting stability in leadership roles will allow leaders to implement long-term strategies, nurture organized teams and develop the field-specific expertise needed for effective educational management.

5.3.3 For Future Researchers

For future researchers, it is encouraged to explore the broader regional or national leadership contexts practices to have comparative insights. Follow up studies could also be conducted to assess the of the leadership reforms leadership reforms influence school performance and organizational outcomes over time.

According to the findings, the recommendation for national policy makers is, The Ministry of Education should set a very clear leadership standard. By standards it means, clear requirements for field expertise in education or educational management. The appointment criteria should give priority to the candidates with relevant qualifications or proven experience in the education sector. There should also be National policy to mandate accredited leadership certification programs and to provide funding for professional development to make sure that all educational leaders, regardless of background have the necessary knowledge to manage educational operations. Also, the Ministry could establish a national monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the leadership practices at all administrative levels. Allocating dedicated national funding for leadership capacity-building initiatives and mentorship schemes can help create a sustainable pipeline of competent leaders, ensuring continuity, stability, and improved educational outcomes nationwide.

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Appendixes

This appendix includes the key research instruments and documents used in this study. It contains the questionnaire administered to staff members and the semi-structured interview questions used with educational office heads. These materials support the data collection process and provide transparency regarding the methodology.

Survey questions for staff members

Title : *Leadership styles of leaders in Educational management practices in Addis Ababa Educational offices: Challenges and prospects.* Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. This survey is part of a study on leadership styles in education offices of Addis Ababa. Your answers will help us gain a general understanding of the challenges and prospects associated with implementing democratic and authoritarian leadership styles. Please read each question carefully and tick (✓) the option that best represents your view. If necessary, please provide additional details in the space provided. Your answers will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Participation is voluntary.

Section A: Demographic information

1. Place of work

- Sub city Education Office (please specify): _____
- District Education Office (please specify): _____

2. Age:-

- 20–30
- 31–40
- 41–50
- 51 and above

3. Sex:

- Male
- Female

4. Education level :

- Diploma
- Degree
- Master's degree
- PhD
- Other (please specify): _____

5. Your job title in the education office:

- Coordinator
- Team Leader
- Specialist
- If other, please specify:

6. Your work experience in the education office (in years)

- Under 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 years and above

Section B: Leadership Styles in Your Education Office

1. Which leadership style do you think is most commonly practiced in your office?

- Authoritarian (the leader makes decisions without employee input)
- Democratic (the leader encourages employee participation in decision-making)
- Mixed (a combination of both leadership styles is applied, depending on the situation)

2. How often does your leader consult with employees before making key decisions?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

3. How would you describe the communication status of the leaders in your office?

- Open and participatory
- Partially inclusive but with limited discussion
- Top-down with little employee input
- No clear communication structure

4. Do you feel empowered to contribute ideas and decisions in your workplace?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. How do you assess the level of employee motivation under the current leadership style?

- Very high
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very low

Section C: Challenges and Prospects in Leadership Practices

1. Do leadership practices in your office have an impact on work efficiency?

- Yes, positively
- Yes, negatively
- No effect

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your view. Use a scale of 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree.

Questions	Response options	Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. What are the main problems you face in your workplace due to leadership practices?	Lack of clear communication					
	Limited participation in decision-making					
	Inconsistent leadership style					
	Resistance to change					
	Insufficient recognition of employees' efforts					
	I have not encountered any challenges.					
	If there is any other (please specify)					
2. In your opinion, how should leadership effectiveness be improved in education offices?	By making decisions more participatory					
	Providing regular leadership training					
	By establishing clearer lines of communication					
	By taking stronger accountability measures					
3. How do you think leadership styles in education offices need to be improved?	Stay as they are					
	They should balance leadership by giving leaders and team members fair decision-making rights.					
	They should move towards more democratic practices					
	They should use flexible leadership styles as needed.					

Section D: Open ended questions

1. What recommendations do you have to improve the management of education offices in Addis Ababa?

2. In your opinion, how does the leadership style in your office affect overall educational management and performance?

Interview Questions for Woreda and Sub-City Leaders

Section 1: Leadership Style Implementation

1. How would you describe your leadership style and why do you prefer it?
2. How do you involve subordinates in decision-making?
3. How do you communicate policies and expectations to schools?

Section 2: Challenges in Applying Leadership Styles

1. What are the main challenges you face in leading educational offices and schools?
2. How do you handle resistance from staff when implementing decisions?
3. What factors affect your ability to apply your leadership style effectively?

Section 3: Prospects for Improvement

1. What improvements would you suggest for leadership practices in educational offices?
2. Do you believe balancing democratic and authoritarian leadership styles would improve governance? Why or why not?
3. What leadership training or professional development would enhance leadership effectiveness?